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## **THE LAND OF THE LINGAM**









YANGA

# THE LAND OF THE LINGAM

By  
ARTHUR MILES

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## INTRODUCTION

**A**SK any Hindu to explain his religion, and he will wander off into a labyrinth of words from which nothing will extricate him but the end of your endurance. If you comment on his belief, he will tell you that you do not understand. "You do not understand" is always the last word of the Hindu.

In spite of the veil drawn over Western understanding, when it tries to peer into that conglomeration of superstitions and myths known as Hinduism, it can at least witness the working out of a religion which may be ever so idealistic in theory, but is quite another thing in practice. Hinduism has no definite tenets, and it seems to have no end. The Vedas, the sacred books of Hinduism, are repudiated by the Gita in strong language. The Charvakas make fun of them, calling them the works of lunatics. The Sikhs, a strong Hindu sect, reject them. Belief in God is not necessary in Hinduism; for none of the orthodox systems of thought recognize a supreme being, with the exception of Yoga (meaning the control of the emotions through postures, etc.), which is one of the late works.

It is only necessary for a flood to stop just short of a certain tree, for the tree to be known thereafter as the reincarnation of some god. Were the tree not holy, it would have been destroyed. A temple might be built under it to shelter the god who had reincarnated in it. Anything may become the abode of a god at a moment's notice, and be taken straightway into the religion. In one of the native states of south India, a Maharaja found a stone in the form of a serpent. A snake temple was immediately erected on the spot.

A caste may also be formed at any time. The advent of motor-cars in Bombay started negotiations for a motor-driver's caste. The men who drove the cars felt superior to the drivers of carriages.

When a Hindu tells you that you cannot understand his religion, he is speaking the truth. Neither can he understand it. You might acquaint yourself with the myths, legends and creeds derived from Brahmanic sources ; you might study the Vedic, Epic and Puranic periods ; you might read the hymns of the Rig-Veda, the oldest literary document ; or you might wade through the Ramayana, which is to India what the *Divine Comedy* is to Italy. But even then you would know nothing of Hinduism, for Hinduism does not exist outside the impressions made by ever-increasing superstitions on each individual mind.

No doubt the early Hindus were engrossed by the might of the elements ; and *agni* (fire), *maruts* (winds), *surya* (the sun), and *ushas* (the dawn) were invoked to obtain their desires. They sought the assistance of the elements, not for their spiritual but for their material welfare. A sinner was a man who failed to address praises to these elemental deities. He might have been a robber or a murderer, but traits of character received no more attention, either spiritual or mundane, than they do to-day. The elemental beings were content with the offering of the moon-flower (*soma*), and the inebriated condition caused by the juice of this exhilarating plant was the form of worship bestowed upon the gods.

Later, there creeps into the mystical language of the Vedic hymns a desire to penetrate into the mysteries of creation. But it does not get beyond wondering why the world was created, and whither it is going. The gods, being subsequent to the origin of the world, cannot explain its mysteries. The Upanishads try to explain the meaning of a supreme deity, but after much metaphysical soaring they acknowledge the inability of the human mind to comprehend its essence.

The Puranic period is the decline of Hinduism so far as the ancient, simple beliefs are concerned. It erects a very elaborate pantheon with Brahma, Vishnu and Siva as the principal gods. At this period the occupants of the divine spheres engage in discord and destruction. Vishnu and Siva contend for the highest rank. Any divine element seems to have left them. They are mixed up with worldly concerns, and disfigured with personal interests.

A philosophical creed arose at this period called Vedanta. It was supposed to appeal to the educated classes. It is based on the belief in one supreme deity, whose perfection is beyond the comprehension of the human mind.

The popular faith of India to-day is founded upon the worship of Siva and Vishnu. The head of the triad, Brahma, seems now to have faded into an abstraction. Practical adoration is divided between the other two, Vishnu the preserver and Siva the destroyer.

The Sivaite worship consists chiefly in the worship of the wives of the god, under the names of Kali, Durga and Parvati. These so-called wives represent the female energies of the god. Such energy is used in the performance of the *sakta*, than which no more disgusting orgy is known.

The caste system was unknown in the original religion. It came into being to permit the priests (now included in the Brahman caste) to exploit the members of all other castes. The Brahman caste is supposed to be divine, and even the humblest member of it is sacred.

But if Hinduism is something too divine for comprehension, the worship of the *lingam* (phallus) and the *yonî* (female generative organ), as practised throughout the length and breadth of India, is obvious to all who understand sex hysteria. The *lingam* stands before most of the temples, and its various representations (sometimes even a pile of stones) are scattered at intervals along the roads. It exists everywhere in India, but mostly in the consciousness of the people.

Sex is the keynote of the Indian's life, from the moment of birth until at his death he leaves Siva's *lingam* wrought in some material he can afford (anything from clay to gold), to win merit for him in the hereafter. His mind must be continually focussed upon the *lingam*. In his social and economic life he must consider it at all times. He must eat nothing which in any way resembles its form. He must fight impotency as he would an assassin, for only loss of physical power can close the door of Siva's heaven.

India can never be a nation until Hinduism, with its superstitions and beastly rites, is wiped out. India will remain as she is to-day, until her castes, from the corrupt intelligentsia of the Brahman cast to the Reddi Bhumalu



and Pokunativaru (whose progenitor was born from one of the unclean cloths discarded by the goddess Parvati), be recognized for just what they are, trade unions. Until the people are divided (if any division is needed at all) simply by their trades, and not by any social and "religious" barriers existing only in the minds of the degenerate Brahmins.

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# THE LAND OF THE LINGAM

## CHAPTER I

### THE LINGAM

**A**LL Hindus, even those who are not actually Sivaites recognize and worship Siva. He is one of the blessed trinity. He represents the force of destruction. Any Hindu will tell you that he destroys in his quest of perfection, only to build again. He has many wives. They are goddesses who represent the energy (the *sakti*) of their husband. He retires absolute, inconceivable. The wife is a sort of emanation from him, bringing his power down to man.

The dance of Siva represents the vibrations of cosmic energy, and it is a very beautiful idea in theory. In actual practice (now only performed in secret in the depths of the jungle) it is known as the *sakta*, the vilest orgy on the face of the earth.

Siva is represented in a horrible form, no doubt to inspire terror. His eyes are huge and staring, his long stringy hair is plaited, his ears are ornamented with snakes, and snakes are twined round his body. His vehicle is the bull, and his weapon the trident. His symbols are the *lingam* and the *yonis*. The cow, usually wrought in bronze, is placed in his temple before the altar. The cow represents Maya (illusion). The seeker for truth must pass illusion to enter the presence of the god. The cow's head is always turned slightly to one side, to permit the seeker to pass in to truth.

When the Mahapralaya (the end of the world) comes, Siva's third eye will blaze out, and universes will crash into each other, reducing everything to ashes. Even the kingdoms of the gods will be destroyed.

Siva rules over the god of death (*yama*). It was Siva who drank the all-consuming poisons which the gods churned out

of the oceans. No more fearful imagery of the power over death could be symbolized.

Thus, in the last analysis it is not death and destruction that Siva represents ; but rather the force of creation, the power defying death and running through all life as cosmic energy. As the Hindus describe it, "the death which is life."

Siva sits in his paradise in Kailasa, and in the silence of the pure snows contemplates the forces of nature, which are his force working through each universe. Nature is erratic, and Siva's force is erratic. Sometimes it is generous and helpful, but it may also be invoked for evil. He will accept any offering, even the victims of murderers.

The *lingam* is the object of the deepest veneration throughout India. The image is worn on the chest, or on a string round the waist to hang over the navel. Sometimes it is painted or tattooed across the navel. The caste mark on the forehead is frequently painted to represent the *lingam*.

Abbé Dubois took this from the *Linga-purana*. This abridged form is as the Abbé wrote it, word for word :

" . . . Brahma, Vishnu, and Vasishta, accompanied by a numerous following of illustrious penitents, went one day to *Kailasa* (the paradise of Siva) to pay a visit to the god, and surprised him in the act of intercourse with his wife. He was not in the least disconcerted by the presence of the illustrious visitors, and so far from showing any shame at being discovered in such a position, continued to indulge in the gratification of his sensual desires.

" The fact was that the shameless god was greatly excited by the intoxicating liquors which he had drunk, and with his reason obscured by passion and drunkenness, he was no longer in a state to appreciate the indecency of his conduct.

" At sight of him some of the gods, and especially Vishnu, began to laugh ; while the rest displayed great indignation and anger, and loaded the shameless Siva with insults and curses.

" They said to him, ' Behold thou art a devil, thou art worse than a devil ! thou has the form of one, and dost possess all the wickedness ! We came here in a spirit of friendliness to pay thee a visit, and thou dost not blush to make us spectators of thy brutal sensuality ! Be accursed ! Let no virtuous person from henceforth have any dealings

with thee ! Let all those who approach thee be regarded as brutes, and be banished from the society of honest folk ! ’

“ After pronouncing these curses, the gods and the penitents retired, covered with shame.

“ When Siva had recovered his senses a little, he asked his guards who it was that had come to visit him. They told him everything that had taken place, and described to him the angry attitude that his illustrious friends had assumed.

“ The words of the guards fell on Siva and his wife Durga like a clap of thunder, and they both died of grief in the same position in which the gods and the penitents had surprised them. Siva desired that the act which had covered him with shame, and which had been the cause of his death, should be celebrated among mankind.

“ ‘ My shame,’ said he, ‘ has killed me ; but it has also given me new life, and a new shape, which is that of the *lingam* ! You, evil spirits, my subjects, regard it as my double self ! Yes, the *lingam* is I myself, and I ordain that men shall offer to it henceforth their sacrifices and worship. Those who honour me under the symbol of the *lingam* shall obtain, without fail, the object of all their desires, and a place in *Kailasa*. I am the Supreme Being, and so is my *lingam*. To render to it the honours due to a god is an action of the highest merit. The margosa tree<sup>1</sup> is, of all trees, the one I love best. If any one wish to obtain my favours, he must offer me the leaves, the flowers and the fruit thereof. Hear once more, evil spirits, my subjects. Those who fast on the fourteenth day of the moon of the month Makha (February) in honour of my *lingam*, and those who, on the following night, do *pūja*, and present to me leaves of the margosa tree, shall be certain of a place in *Kailasa*.

“ ‘ Hear yet again, evil spirits, my subjects. If you desire to become virtuous, learn what are the benefits to be derived from honour rendered to my *lingam*. Those who make images of it with earth or cow-dung, or do *pūja* to it under this form, shall be rewarded ; those who make it in stone shall receive seven times more reward, and shall never behold the Prince of Darkness ; those who make it in silver shall receive seven times more reward than the last named ; and those who make it in gold shall be seven times more meritorious still.

<sup>1</sup> It is the *Belva* not the *Margosa* which is sacred to Siva.—ED.

“ ‘ Let my priests go and teach these truths to men, and compel them to embrace the worship of my *lingam* ! The *lingam* is Siva himself ; it is white ; it has three eyes and five faces ; it is arrayed in a tiger’s skin. It existed before the world, and it is the origin and the beginning of all beings. It disperses our terrors and our fears, and grants us the object of all our desires.’ ”

The worshippers of Siva say that the invention of this story was the wish to depict the cosmic energy behind the phenomenon called life. This is all very well, but the Indian needs no push into a religion which so completely tones with his inclinations.

In actual practice, the worship of the *lingam* has given India eighty-seven per cent of syphilis, a large portion of the world’s insanity and social and economic conditions with which no government can cope. And all this notwithstanding the serious meditators, who have withdrawn voluntarily, or otherwise, from the world’s activities to contemplate their navels. Most of this meditation, however, is only another form of sensuality ; not quite so healthy as the ardency of the devotee who brazenly rubs his or her body against the *lingam*.

One day, while driving through a street in Bangalore City, my car came to a stop from lack of petrol, directly in front of a holy man who squatted on the ground beside his begging-bowl. His hair was matted to a degree past any comb’s straightening out, Siva’s *lingam* was painted on his forehead, and from his mouth dripped two lines of betel juice, the hideous red of which dyed the skin of his chest and the edge of his filthy *dhotie*. As he moved about on his rump, he displaced the fold of his *dhotie* and disclosed his member, swollen to many times its normal size, and covered with insects and sores.

A fifty-year-old owner of many wives was taken to a Hyderabad hospital for treatment, and on examination it was found necessary to remove his genital organs. He was practically dropping to pieces, and after hurriedly etherizing him, the doctor performed the operation. When the man came out of the ether, however, and realized what had happened to him, he began to scream and curse. He raved until everyone in the hospital knew that he had just bought a new wife, whom he would no longer be able to “ use.” He

had paid four hundred rupees<sup>1</sup> for her, and he swore he would be even with the man who had rendered him impotent. On leaving the hospital he tried to sue the doctor, but no one would take his case. The man's last wife thus escaped the hideous fate which the others had to accept. No doubt they were quietly rotting away, supposing their condition to have been caused by the wrath of some god who had not been properly propitiated.

There is a fortune-teller in a hovel in Bangalore, who assails the gods with *mantrams*<sup>2</sup> to discover which love-potion he should deal out to his clients. His shelves are lined with bottles of so-called aphrodisiacs; doses made of cow-dung, cow-urine, bat's blood, and the sap of trees. The clients pay good prices for these concoctions to whip up their flagging passion.

Again, a European doctor in a Southern city is paid by wealthy Indians thousands of rupees for injections guaranteed to arouse desire, no matter how long dormant. This doctor insists upon his patients paying in advance. He went to India with nothing; now he lives like a prince—with a beautiful home, two motor-cars (one of which is a Rolls Royce) and indulges in frequent holidays in Europe. Such is the irresistible appeal of recaptured virility.

Three men from the Mythic Society visited our house one day, and as they were very high caste Brahmans, we hesitated about asking them to stay to lunch. Finally, when they showed no disposition to leave, we were obliged to do so. Knowing that meat of any sort was taboo, we offered an egg salad. It was promptly refused, because the egg in form resembles the *lingam*. Cucumbers and potatoes were turned down for the same reason. With a feeling of intense relief, we saw the boy bringing in a dish of braised onions. Here, we thought, was something to which our guests could not take exception. To our amazement the onions were also waved away, since, as the Brahmans explained to us, the little sections at the centre of the onions resemble the *yonî*, or female organ of generation. The three gentlemen ate a plate of rice each, the consumption of which was accompanied by belching and much clearing of their throats. This display of manners was to show how they were enjoying the food. In fact one of them, to put us entirely at our ease, blew his nose

<sup>1</sup> Thirty pounds—150 dollars.

<sup>2</sup> Charms—prayers.

on his *dhotie*. These Brahmans, who could not eat clean vegetables, would not quibble about eating cow-dung and drinking cow's urine, for these two articles of diet are sacred. No doubt they went home, after sitting at table with Untouchables, and "purified themselves."

Everyone knows that medicines to increase desire have a far greater sale in India than in any country in the world. A young doctor told us that anyone can "become rich in no time by the sale of a good aphrodisiac." The newspapers are filled with advertisements of medicines and contraptions to restore manhood. A "cure" which is very popular with men who are too impatient to await the results of internal medicines or injections, is a suppository which is inserted in the rectum. This is supposed to produce desire immediately.

It is an interesting fact that the makers of rejuvenating medicines sell only their products for men in India. No woman would need to be rejuvenated, for she would be ruled out of any physical consideration long before such need arose.

Impotence is the dread of every Indian. The very thought of it fills him with horror, and he will give up any habit at once if he is told that sexual disability is likely to result.

Mr. Dec, of the "D" Engineering Works of Coimbatore, stopped the use of palm-toddy in his factory by threatening those addicted to it with impotency. This was a stroke of genius; for no amount of argument, or any system of fining, would have been effective.

In Assam, at the yearly festival of Fagwa, which was established for the release of profanity, and to permit the people to hurl vile names and red ink at each other, I encountered a weird individual. His body was covered with ashes. He wore a necklace of animals' teeth, and carried a human skull in one hand, while with the other he made indecent gestures. When I inquired about him, I was told that he was known as an *Aghora-panthi*. Such creatures cannot distinguish between right and wrong. They dance in the cremation grounds. Their food consists of dead bodies and excrement, and they drink out of a human skull. They believe that they have become special favourites with the god of darkness. People fear them, but believe that they are possessed of miraculous, superhuman powers. Later, I looked up the *Aghora-panthi* and found that he existed in the seventh

century. The intervening years have wrought no change in the worship of lust.

In one of the tribes of South India the village barber officiates at weddings with an enormous stone *lingam* suspended from his neck. The child bride and bridegroom sit naked before him, and he is supposed to sprinkle their heads with *ghi* (melted butter). But owing to the size of the *lingam*, and the troublesome attentions of young boys behind him (the annoyance of the boys is part of the ceremony), he is prevented from fulfilling his part of the rite.

Not long ago in Bellary district (South India) four marriages were celebrated. The ages of the brides ranged from four to eight years. The husbands, for disobeying the Sarda Act (the law which is supposed to protect a girl under the age of fourteen), were fined ten rupees (fifteen shillings). In default of payment, the sentence called for one week of simple imprisonment. One of the husbands, incidentally, was an honorary magistrate at Hospet.

While such minor sentences are considered adequate for crimes of this sort India can have no place in the march of civilization. Such assault on children, because it is done under the cloak of marriage, is dealt with very leniently. No such leniency, on the other hand, was shown a waterman of Bengal, who received three years' hard labour for assaulting a girl of four.

In some parts of South India the stem of a plant, which expands when brought in contact with moisture, is inserted into the vagina of little girls to prepare them for cohabitation at a very early age. Such treatment, with a slight variation (the inserted articles ranging from small to large progressively), is used to dilate the rectum of little boys for sodomy. In this last respect it may be mentioned that it is quite well known that a certain Indian prophet of the day was the "boy" of his teacher, an equally well known religious leader.

In Calcutta, because it is a "tolerated area," over two thousand girls, between the ages of eight and twelve, are kept in houses of prostitution. The number of these unfortunates increases every year, in spite of the two homes for such children, one maintained by the Police and the other by the Calcutta Vigilance Association. The reason given for the increase is that in place of each girl who can escape, another



is brought in. *No attempt is made on behalf of the Government to interfere with the children, who might of their own free will choose to lead a life of shame. And so long as the "tolerated area" is accepted, the sale of women and girls will continue.*

Much oration goes on in Calcutta. Many speeches and arguments can be heard. The only intelligent force trying to deal with the question of child prostitution is the All-Bengal Woman's Union. But this organization has to fight the Government and the oratory. It may be that Calcutta is waiting to see how the law suppressing immoral traffic is going to turn out in Bombay, where it has been enforced. Immoral traffic exists in all countries either openly or secretly. But in no country, save India, do girls enter a life of serious prostitution before puberty.

It can be readily understood that a people imbued with the worship of the *lingam* from their early impressionable years can see nothing wrong in the cases I have described. To their minds they are not crimes. Any worship of sex is worship of their god, and as such must receive merit.

People who cannot eat food which in shape resembles the *lingam* or the *yoni*, cannot be expected to pay much attention to man-made laws, especially when they are flavoured with Western justice. The magistrate who took the child-wife was doing no wrong before his god. No doubt he had assimilated many Western ideas, but he could in no way consider himself a criminal. The Indian usually accepts Western ideas with his tongue in his cheek ; all the educational movements, which he is ever ready to discuss, notwithstanding. Again, the man in the hospital had no resentment against the doctor as a man. He regarded him as simply an obstacle on his pathway to *Kailasa*. To be a carrier of syphilis might be an unfortunate condition, inasmuch as it halted his sexual activities ; but it was not a crime. He went to the doctor believing he could patch him up for the further propagation of sons.

## CHAPTER II

### BLOOD SACRIFICE

**H**UMAN sacrifice, or *Meriah* rite, is still practised in India. True, it is forbidden by the Government, and the perpetrators of it are properly punished when they are discovered. Nevertheless, it is carried on to quite an extent in secret. To hoodwink the Government and the curious public, a sheep or a goat is shaved to produce a crude imitation of a human being. A *dhotie* is draped round its body, a hat put on its head, and a caste mark painted on its forehead. It is then sacrificed as a human being. But this does not deceive anyone who is "in the know."

It is difficult for Government officials to probe into the rites of blood sacrifice. Indians will deliberately shut the eye of an official, as many officials have discovered when they have tried to investigate along certain lines of information. Missionaries who learn much from converts, and persons of no sort of status, usually know more about the secret rites than persons who are sent to investigate.

A priest in one of the towns in Mysore State missed one of his converts. After searching for some days, he learned that the boy had been lured to a weird ceremony to propitiate the god of a new water-tank. The boy had been the victim chosen to appease the blood-lust of the god, and the priest learned to his amazement that a human sacrifice was usually placed under the foundations of the water-tanks.

Human sacrifices are made to the earth goddess Tari Pennu by one of the castes of Bengal, to ensure abundant crops. Human blood is supposed to be the only thing which will increase the harvest. The person for sacrifice is not recognized by the goddess unless he has been born in the particular division of this caste, which has been marked for sacrifice. The victim in this case is considered most holy, for by his death he benefits all mankind.

Certain of these consecrated beings are kept for years before they are sacrificed, and they are treated with extreme deference. The victim's hair is allowed to grow until the appointed time for him to be sacrificed. It is then shorn and distributed to the people, who plant it together with their seeds.

Wild debauchery precedes the rite. The victim, clothed in a new garment, is paraded before the worshippers, and taken to a place in the jungle which has been appointed for the sacrifice. He is tied to one of the trees and his body is anointed with *ghi*, tumeric and flowers. Anything taken from him at this time is sacred. The worshippers almost suffocate him as they close in and try to get a drop of his spittle to rub on their hair, or a smear of the tumeric paste to rub on their bodies. Prayers are addressed to the earth goddess, and an earth dance is enacted to the accompaniment of primitive music.

The ceremony of the sacrifice lasts for several days. On the final day the victim is again anointed with oil, and each member of the participating crowd rubs his hand on the oil and smears it on his person. Several modes of death may be chosen for him, but the one most in favour is strangulation. His neck is usually broken before the worshippers are satisfied. At a sign from the executioner, each member of the crowd rushes up and tears the flesh from the victim's body, and which he will later throw on his fields to enrich the crops. The head and the intestines must not be touched, else the victim will not be acceptable to the goddess. In the old days he was cut up alive, and his flesh was distributed amongst the caste.

Another mode of sacrifice, which does not seem to be practised now, was slowly to burn the chosen one to death. The more he struggled and screamed, the more abundant would be the harvest. The head and intestines were never given to the caste. They were burnt three days after the sacrifice, and the ashes scattered on the fields, or placed before the goddess.

Indians will tell you that these sacrifices are not made to-day. But less than three years ago some friends of mine who had wandered from their camp during a tiger-hunting expedition in a Bengal jungle, saw the sacrifice on the last day of the rite, with its full accompaniment of horror. And the

killing of their children by the Kallans of Madura district in the last century has its parallel to-day.

Only last year a priest of Somavarapatti, a village in the Coimbatore district, murdered his twelve-year-old son to appease the wrath of the goddess Kandi-amma, the goddess of disease, who insisted on a libation of blood. At the inquest, Muthuswamy, the priest, stated that the car festival (the juggernaut) had not been celebrated for two years. This fact provoked the wrath of the goddess, who threatened to wipe out the village with an epidemic unless she was appeased with human blood. She appeared to the priest in a dream, and told him that the blood of his eldest son could alone expiate the sin of failing to hold the car ceremony. Muthuswamy, therefore, decapitated his son with an axe, and poured his blood before the idol of Kandi-amma.

Naturally Muthuswamy was tried for murder ; much to the disgust of the people of the village, who saw an act of great merit in his sacrifice.

A few months after the case I have just mentioned Musamat Umrai, a woman of Lucknow, suddenly lost her voice when singing with other women of the Sujauli village. After consultation, the women decided that a sacrifice must be made to the goddess Bhagivati of Saraswati. Umrai, thereupon, decoyed Kunia, a little girl, to a *nim* tree, knocked her down with a spade, and hacked her to pieces. In court Umrai stated that the sacrifice had the desired effect. All the women were able to sing very much better after it. None the less, Umrai was sentenced to death.

In the two cases I have recorded, justice was meted out to the criminals because the crimes were discovered. But very few cases of human sacrifice are discovered, because every member of a caste will protect the perpetrators of crimes inspired by the fanatical zeal to propitiate their gods. Frequently when the rivers "fail to come down," as the Indians express the yearly flooding, a virgin is sacrificed in the bed of the river. This is done at night in some secluded spot, and seldom comes to the attention of the authorities.

No so long ago the women of one of the castes of South India murdered their children to vindicate themselves in quarrels. They were vile-tempered hussies, who were for-ever disputing with each other, and the insulted one would bring

her child to the house of her accuser and kill it on the doorstep to avenge herself. After this slaughter the case was carried to the headman of the village, and he started an investigation to see which woman was at fault. If the husband of the accused found that his wife was really to blame, he took one of his children and in his turn killed it on the doorstep of the woman who was innocent.

Hindus will tell you, to account for their fiendish brutality, that everything is *Yajna* (the idea that all life is a sacrifice, an offering to god). They will say that the West sacrifices millions of animals each year for food, and there is much which might be said to defend this accusation. But we are not touching on the question of flesh as food. At least, the Western animals are killed mercifully, and not tortured to death in some insane sex debauch before an idol. And the same principle applies where an Indian, to whom I was once speaking upon the subject, reminded me of Julius Cæsar's account of the human sacrifices of the Celts when he carried his Roman forces to Gaul. There is hardly any comparison to be made between the sacrifices of the Celts, who slew criminals (a form of justice of their days), and the present human sacrifices of India.

But if human sacrifice is of necessity done in secret, this is not the case with the sacrifices of animals. Goats and sheep are sacrificed any day at Kali Ghat ; and their blood is lapped up from the ground by the faithful. At most of the temples of sacrifice, when the blood of an animal is spilled for the believers to drink, or to smear themselves with, after the body has been immersed in the Ganges, or some one of its tributaries, it is given to the butcher to sell to the Untouchables. All meat eaters, including the Europeans, are "Untouchables."

I saw a gruesome sight one night in a jungle in Mysore. A wild-looking individual brought a goat into a clearing, followed by a number of infuriated maniacs chanting some sort of *mantrams*. They all came forward and touched the goat, and then the man who was leading the animal decapitated it with an axe. He held up the dripping head and drank some of the blood, after which some of the others rushed up and held their open mouths under the drip. Those who could not drink, smeared their bodies with the gore. The fire they had made for the occasion, and by the light of which we watched, burned down ; and we could not be sure whether

they hacked the body to pieces and distributed the flesh, or whether they burned it. No doubt it was a river sacrifice of some sort.

In the maritime sacrifices of South Kathiawar they invoke the goddess with cries of “ *Mata, Mata !* ” A goat is sacrificed at the bow, upon the launching of a lighter. A lighter received its name, they say, because it lightens a vessel of its load. The following is the account of a friend who witnessed the ceremony in South India :

A black sheep was brought into an assembly of people, who were muttering *mantrams* and making weird noises. The body of the sheep was first rubbed with oil, and then painted with vermilion stripes. Its horns were decorated with flowers, and its nostrils, ears and mouth stuffed with something which resembled dried grass. Several members of the assembly dealt it heavy blows with stones and sticks ; after which, one man killed it by pressing his knee into its throat. When it was dead they cut open its stomach, and pulled out its entrails and all the fat they could tear loose. The fat they laid on one side, and having collected quite a pile of it, they held it over a fire of brushwood and allowed it to liquefy and drop into the fire. Finally, they hacked the body to pieces, frying huge portions of it in *ghi*, or devouring it raw, and letting the blood trickle down over their faces and hands.

My friend saw no god about, nor did he hear the name of any god mentioned. He concluded that it was a sacrifice to fire.

In the Madiga, which is a leather-working caste of the Telugu country, during one of the festivals a young man, who is clothed in nothing but a few leaves, is supposed to faint from fear of the goddess. In this apparent unconscious condition, he is taken to the temple and laid before the idol. Soon he is revived, and clothed in a *dhotie* and some pieces of cloth. He then takes a sheep, holds it in his arms like a child, and bites through its jugular vein. He turns and faces the people, with his face covered with blood, before the sheep is thrown down by him. The people remove the animal, but not one of them is merciful enough to deal it a knock-out blow.

This same tribe makes a sacrifice to their god during epidemics. A buffalo is used on this occasion. The beast's head is cut off, and the blood is poured over boiled rice. The head, with one of the legs stuck in its mouth, is placed before

the shrine in one basket, and the rice and blood beside it in another. One of the devotees then puts the animal's head on his own, with a lighted lamp on the top of it. He twists a rag, which has been dipped in the blood, around his waist. Ropes are tied to his body, and held by men who follow him. Limes are cut in pieces, and thrown into the air all about him. This is to keep the evil spirits, who are watching from behind the trees all along the road, from following him. He then passes in front of the houses whose owners have subscribed to the ceremony.

I actually witnessed this festival during a plague epidemic in a southern village. I was told that sometimes, instead of the bloody rag worn round the waist, the animal's intestines were pulled out and draped with ends trailing in a ghastly fringe.

During one of the festivals held in Godaveri district a pig is buried up to its neck in the earth, and cattle are driven over it until it is trampled to death. This guarantees the health of the cattle for the coming year.

The Malayali (one of the castes of the Salem district) tries to fool the demon when that worthy demands a human sacrifice. Weird designs are drawn on the ground with yellow paste, and a man, very much disguised with paint, leaves and pieces of cloth, dances in the designs. His left arm is pierced with a knife, and when the blood spurts out, he waves his arm about so that the blood will cover his face. After this a chicken is decapitated, and, putting the neck in his mouth, he sucks the blood.

Needless to say, during all these ceremonies the people work themselves into frenzy, and act like jungle beasts.

In ancient days horses were sacrificed to the gods, in much the same way as the Greeks flung the chariot and its four horses into the sea once a year as a sacrifice to the sun. I know of no place in India where the horse is sacrificed to-day. It is now worshipped instead, in much the same fashion as the cow.

The Maharani (the younger one) of Mysore said to a lady one day, as they were watching the state cows taking their sacredness past in one of the unnumerable processions: "Hasn't the white one a beautiful face? Doesn't she look just like a mother?" On this particular occasion, my friend told me, the royal cows were decked out with enough neck-

laces of pearls and precious stones to end all the poverty of the state.

To mention the way bullocks are castrated seems a fitting conclusion for this chapter. The testicles are held between two pieces of wood, which are pressed together until the testicles are broken. A hammer is then used to pound the organs against one of the pieces of wood, till they are reduced to pulp. Nothing is given to deaden the creature's pain. And this is the animal that bears all India's burdens. It carts and hauls from the early age at which it is castrated, until it drops dead from fatigue. Its route is directed by the pain it must endure when its tail is twisted.



## CHAPTER III

### TORTURES

**E**VERY religion has at some time in its history practised masochism. But what the West dismissed from her dogma in the seventeenth century the devotees of Hinduism still maintain and practise with ardent fanaticism to-day.

In India it is still believed that many material blessings may be won, and men purified and elevated by austerity, fasting and bodily torture. The close relation between sex and physical suffering lies behind the Chidi-mari and Taipusan ceremonies. These ceremonies, although undergone for a different purpose, are comparable to the flagellation of the West.

### CHIDI-MARI

To anyone who has witnessed the Chidi-mari, or hook-swinging (still practised, and though discouraged by magistrates, not actually forbidden by law), the mental cruelty of the Brahman priests comes as a shock. The Brahman priests are traditionally the real leaders of the people. In theory, even Maharajas, generals and politicians are subservient to their will. The Brahmans have it in their power to abolish all these self-inflicted tortures ; but they are apathetic, too detached, too holy, to interfere with others of lower castes.

Because of this isolation and holiness the Brahmans are losing their grip. The recent *satyagraha*, or strike, of the Untouchables and lower caste Hindus in Guruvayur (South Malabar) is an indication as to which way the wind is blowing. In the temple of Guruvayur, which is dedicated to Krishna, Brahmans are served by their Brahman priests with *passadam* (flowers and sandal paste used in worship) directly into their hands ; whereas, for caste Hindus, it is dropped on the altar for them to pick up.

To overcome this caste distinction, parties of caste Hindus mix with the Brahmans taking food in the temple hostel (it

is an important part of the temple routine to feed Brahmans), and so pollute them. At the temple worship the caste Hindus insist upon the same treatment as the polluted Brahmans.

The Untouchables, according to custom, may not even approach the entrances of the temple for fear of polluting caste and Brahman worshippers. They, in their turn, pollute the holy elephants (pets of the deity used in worship), and claim entrance to the temple with the polluted elephants. Where an animal can go, they say, a human being can go also.

It was in a small town to the west of Madura, far from the influence of a British magistrate, where I saw the Chidi-mari ceremony in all its gruesomeness. From questions asked, I understood that the victim of the wrath of the gods in this case was a poor man whose children were dying. He had been so ill as to be unable to cultivate his land. Nothing would propitiate the wrath of the gods but the intervention of the goddess Mari-amma, who, according to legend, is the blood-thirsty Kali. In prostration before the god Subramania (son of Siva), it came to the unhappy man that he must make the sacrifice of Chidi-mari and thus appease the wrath of the gods. After *puja*<sup>1</sup> and the blessing of the local priest, he started to walk the thirty odd miles to the nearest gibbet-like structure. Here he was met by one of the attendants of the temple, who beat the muscles of his back into insensibility and inserted two hooks such as can be seen in any butcher's shop. By these the poor devotee was hoisted some ten feet into the air. My arrival on the scene, or fear that I would report the incident, seems to have been the signal for the sufferer's release. From my brief observation, Narayanswamy, for as such he gave his name, seemed to be stoically bearing great pain. Yet on release he professed to feeling nothing, to such a degree of fanaticism had he worked himself; and after a drink of milk he started on his return walk home.

Owing to Government intervention, this sacrifice is growing less and less. Instead of the human body a little wooden figure, dressed in fantastic clothes, is hoisted and swung round. But in country districts, far from supervision, nothing will satisfy the devotees but the torture of their own bodies.

Returning from Chidi-mari I tried to photograph some of

<sup>1</sup> Worship.

the hideous village gods, idols made of clay, of such tremendous proportions and ugliness as to inspire awe and disgust in the most unimaginative. During this operation I was mobbed and stoned by the villagers. Luckily I had left the engine of the car running, and I was able to escape before too many collected and surrounded the car, as so often happens. The villagers had the usual superstition that any picture or photograph of these gods detracts from their power, and that something of their magnetism leaves them for the imprint on the photographic plate or artist's canvas.

Practically all these gruesome gods are made of clay ; the Hindus being forbidden to make idols of wood, or other equally perishable materials. This was an injunction placed upon them, no doubt, by the old sages who had already experienced the ravages of the white ant. There is one exception, however, to this rule. The effigy of the goddess Mari-amma is usually constructed of some red wood, which, when punctured, oozes a red sap resembling blood ; a very suitable material for a goddess who can be only propitiated with a sanguinary libation.

#### TAIPUSAN

During the period of full moon, in the month of February, the roads are cluttered with devotees of Taipusan, another torture sacrifice. It is remarkable that all these devotees are of the humble poor. The central figure in each group has been the victim of some misfortune during the preceding year. He has prostrated himself before the gods, and sworn to make the sacrifice of Taipusan.

This sacrifice takes the form of a pilgrimage under torture. From one of the illustrations it will be seen that the devotee is walking on spiked sandals, and has hooked to the muscular part of his arms and chest large bunches of lemons. Each bunch contains from twenty-five to thirty lemons. Added to this, he carries a gaily decorated teak-wood arc mounted on a spiked cross-board. Other fanatics in the illustrations have so pierced themselves with Siva's trident as to leave no more room for further insertions. Balanced on these tridents is a heavy brass vase containing an offering of *ghi* for Siva's *lingam*. For purposes of locomotion the legs are unfettered,



ONE OF THE TORTURES OF TAIPIUSAN. THE VICTIM  
IS WALKING ON SPIKED SANDALS WHICH PIERCE  
HIS FEET AT EVERY STEP



but, as will be seen, hot brandings have been applied to increase the tortures. Each devotee is followed by his friend, who administers to his wants, and a small crowd of onlookers who jeer at or encourage him on the pilgrimage. These processions are fanatical in the extreme and God, or Allah, help any Christian or Mohammadan who interferes with their progress. The wants of the pilgrims on the journey are, of necessity, small. Tradition allows only a little milk or water to sustain them. But at every place where water is available they are sprinkled lavishly by the friend or onlookers.

One of the Indian onlookers informed me that the man on the spiked sandals had covered more than ten miles in this fashion. He explained that the victims were always poor men who made the pilgrimage ; it being impossible for the gods to be angry with a rich man, otherwise he would not be rich. If a rich man were ill or unlucky, money would always appease the wrath of the gods. The poor man had nothing but his tortured body to offer in sacrifice. It was not unheard of for a rich man (knowing the avarice of the Brahman priests, the god's deputy) to hire a poor man to make the pilgrimage for him.

With my chance acquaintance as sponsor, I was allowed to enter the temple at Tanjore, the end of the pilgrimage, and even allowed to approach the god, Subramanya, where I was garlanded with sickening-smelling double jasmine. The god, just a plain stone idol, was covered with gold and precious stones, the offerings of those who were rich enough to avoid the pilgrimage.

The chest and back of one pilgrim was bedecked with flowers, concealing the hooks in his flesh, to which was harnessed a light carriage. The carriage was crowned with the effigy of the god Subramanya as a general in the army of the gods when he slew the demon Taraka (see chapter on Legends of the Gods). This man was accompanied by musicians who, as they approached the temple, started to play a wild dance tune on their shrieking instruments. Others less encumbered, half-dead fanatics, whirled in a mad scene that in bestiality left nothing to be desired. Finally, exhausted and covered with blood, the pilgrims staggered into the temple from which we had been watching the finale of their pilgrimage.

To those who are able to inflict on their bodies such refinements of torture, anything is possible ; especially when such cruelties are done in the name of religion. Another masochistic

torture which I have encountered, is to have the cheeks pierced from side to side with kitchen skewers. This is said to paralyse the tongue, and is endured for some days. During that time the only nourishment is a small amount of liquid, which is poured into the mouth. In addition to the skewers, the mouth is sometimes locked with a band of silver to assure silence. This may be worn for as many as forty days, during which period the devotee lives by begging. Milk is poured into his mouth through a slit in the mouth lock. Others, not so fanatically inclined, content themselves by covering their mouths with a handkerchief to denote their vow of silence.

The origin of Taipusan has been lost in antiquity. That it was a ceremony to propitiate the smallpox goddess is believed by some ; whereas others, less orthodox, assert that it was merely a show staged in various places to make money circulate. Among the Kaikolans, who haunt the vicinity of Conjeeveram, the ceremony seems to have lapsed. Their priests declare, however, that this lapse is not due to any Government intervention, but to the fact that the goddess Kali (Mari-amma being an emanation of Kali) has not spoken on the subject for years. In this district it is believed that the piercing of the abdomen with spears is in honour of the god Sahanayannar.

Quite recently, and a few days before the Ganesh (elephant-headed god) ceremony, Vithoba Karanjalkar went to his mother-in-law's house and asked her to send his girl-wife, aged thirteen, home for the festival. She refused, whereupon some days later he returned, accompanied by several others, and forcibly removed his wife. On reaching home, he confined his thirteen-year-old bride in a room, trussed up her arms and drove a double-pointed plough nail into each of her feet. Before the magistrate, his pleader (solicitor) urged that Vithoba had confined his child-wife under, what he thought to be, the right of a husband. The law of Manu sanctions the subjection of women : " Let her be in subjection to her father in her childhood, to her husband in her youth, to her sons when her husband is dead ; let a woman never enjoy independence."

However much the origin of Taipusan has been lost in antiquity, the authority for the maiming of a woman's hand has been carefully preserved. But for the actual practice of maiming there has been substituted the bandaging together

of two fingers until they become useless. Traces of the old original practice can still be seen on the hands of old women in Mysore State.

When the mutilation was practised, it was the custom for the mother of the bride, previous to the betrothal of her eldest daughter, to have the third and fourth finger of her right hand amputated at the first joint. This operation was performed by the blacksmith with a chisel, and naturally no anæsthetics were used. The blood was staunched by a rag dipped in boiling gingelly-oil. Should the betrothed be motherless, the mother of the bridegroom served instead, if she had not already undergone the disfigurement.

In some districts the same mutilation was performed in the temple to commemorate the birth of the first grandchild. At this happy event the eldest son of the grandfather was summoned, with his wife, to the temple, where the wife had the same two fingers amputated. This was coincident with the religious ceremony for boring the infant's ears.

Two legends are quoted to sanctify this atrocious practice.

One relates that Siva, in the form of Mahadeva, was being pursued by a giant. As a means of escape he hid himself in a castor-oil plantation. Fearing the wrath of the giant, and failing to recognize Siva, a *ryot* (cultivator) pointed out the hiding-place of the god. Vishnu, passing in the shape of a beautiful maiden, diverted the attention of the giant, who turned aside to ravish the maiden and so gave Siva time to escape. Siva was so enraged at the conduct of this *ryot* that he cursed him, and ordered he should have cut off the index finger of the hand which had pointed out his hiding-place. The cultivator's wife, arriving with her husband's food, heard the sentence and asked that she might replace her husband, otherwise such a disablement would prevent him earning their living. And to this Siva agreed.

The other legend states that at a certain temple the gods were very displeased because the priest, in reciting the public prayers, could not pitch his voice to the tune of the drum. The priest then obtained the services of a young Brahman boy, the pitch of whose voice, it was hoped, would synchronize with the tune of the drum and so relieve the gods' displeasure. The boy's voice failed to serve the purpose, and the gods suspended him some ten feet from the ground, from which position no



one could move him until his Brahman father hurried to the temple and severed one of his son's fingers. The blood that flowed from the wound was offered and accepted as a sacrifice by the gods, who released the spell. The Brahman father then took up the chanting of the prayers, and his voice was able to catch the pitch of the drum. However, for interrupting the public worship the gods visited their wrath on the drummer, and decreed that the drummer's women should all suffer the same mutilation as that suffered by the young Brahman boy.

India has produced many would-be reformers, but she still awaits one who, like the early Christians of Alexandria, has the courage to burn up all the old books. A few generations after such a fire these old legends might be dissipated from the minds of the people.

*Suttee*, or the burning of widows on the funeral pyre of their husbands, is dead, we are told—killed by Government decree. But the spirit of *suttee* is still very much alive, and only waiting for the weakening of Government control to break out again as if it had never paused. And it is kept alive, especially in the Tottiyar and Uppara castes, by the household gods which are representations of departed female relations who committed *suttee* on the funeral pyre.

In his book, published no later than 1925, Mr. Jagadisayyar, in a plea for the ethics of *suttee*, states that the basis of Hindu thought and belief is that one can never cease to exist. The body may be burnt to ashes, but somewhere beyond there is a conscious existence where one may enjoy the company of others just as in this world. What more natural, he says, than that the loving Hindu wife should wish to enjoy the company of her husband in whatever state of consciousness he may encounter after death. Hindu mythology admits a hell—a very terrible place. But Mr. Jagadisayyar, or any other Indian writer I have read on the subject, never mentions what he thinks would be the position if Yama (lord of hell) and Chandra Gupta (the keeper of the records of life) should decide that the couple must separate. Must the woman continue to sacrifice herself even in that dim and very uncertain beyond? This Indian writer goes on to state that the old Brahman priests had knowledge of the juice of some herb, which when mixed with sandal-paste and rubbed over the body, would

render the *suttee* insensible to heat. He says that this juice is comparable to the anæsthetics used to-day.

Not only is *suttee* eulogized by Indian orthodoxy, but as recently as June, 1932, at Masulipatam, a subscription list, largely signed, was being circulated, seeking funds to raise a monument to the memory of a Hindu girl who had committed *suttee* during the previous May. This crime was not the last-minute sublimation of an emotional young girl driven to suicide. It was the carefully planned act, fostered by misguided ideals and faulty religious teachings, and carried out in her own wedding garments. A person with even a superficial knowledge of the country knows that such a ceremony would not be possible without the connivance of her caste and family. Moreover, the report I have on the matter goes on to say that the scene of this *suttee* was being visited daily by a large number of pilgrims.

Another interesting spectacle that sometimes accompanies the torture processions, and which will give one an insight into the minds of these sex-maddened peoples and their Brahman leaders, was described to me by a friend who had seen it. It takes place near Salem, where the local goddess is taken from the temple and with much ceremony is undressed. She is then invited to enter a gaily-decorated rickshaw. To keep her company on this yearly outing, a male idol is borrowed from a neighbouring temple, undressed, and placed in front of her. By pulling various strings, the escort of temple attendants is able to make the two figures assume disgusting postures, and to increase the degradation of the ceremony a member of one of the lowest castes of Untouchables, one who takes the dead bodies to the burning ghat, is instructed in all the worst profanity known. He accompanies the procession, and for a few *pice*, or copper coins, will impersonate the goddess and hurl profanity and insults according to the amount of his payment.

## CHAPTER IV

### BRAHMANS

#### I

IT was the lack of spine, and the willingness to place themselves under the Brahmanic heel as an army of worthless slaves, which lost to the people the empire of Asoka. The king of that time, the "Shudra," had concentrated in his person all worldly power. The people, and organizations for their welfare, never entered his mind. He was father, mother, god to them, and like all supreme egotists he never troubled to think what would happen to the people at his death. God does not prepare a successor. Nevertheless, in spite of his own splendid reign, and his introduction of Buddhism as the state religion, chaos followed quickly upon his heels, as it does upon the heels of most dictators. The Brahmans, ever watchful for the death of the hated Buddhist, saw to it at his death that a dynastic change should take place under their direction. Working through the Brahmanized wife of the Commander of the Army, they won the Commander over with their priestly wiles. The king's successor was killed by a person who could never be found, and the Commander's son reigned in his place. The effete people accepted the dynastic change without a murmur, and placed themselves under the Brahmanic heel.

During the reign of Agnimitra, the Commander's son, the Buddhist literature was Hinduized and absorbed into Hinduism ; that insatiable maw which sucks everything into itself. Caste was then regulated by birth, and birth was governed by past *karma* (faults and virtues of a previous life). Tibetan mahatmas came into being, along with white brotherhoods and black brotherhoods, with secret doctrines and with outer schools for the masses. These agents of God had a monopoly on the hereafter, and they could issue any sort of insurance policy for the next world. With quackery and

obscurantism they kept, and still keep, the people in a lamentable state of ignorance.

It is not so surprising, however, when one considers the illiterate state of the people, then and now ; a state forced upon them by the priests who must retain their power. The people of the West, on the other hand, who are gulled by these long-robed swamis need no sympathy. What they need is to be certified for the mental ward.

The " Friends of the East," and other societies who have been taken in by the effeminate voice and manner of some member of an Eastern erotic cult, would do well to go to India and see how their money is distributed among the " poor." The soft-voiced beggars are usually Brahmans, and the poor are no more to them than the dirt under their feet. The poor man is either suffering for some sin committed in a past life, or he is ascending the *karmic* ladder from the lowest rungs. He may be coming up out of some animal form, which he (the progressive ego) occupied in another life. He is not fit to breathe the same air with the twice-born. It is impossible for the West to educate a people who cannot enter a hospital for treatment, because their gods, according to their earthly representatives the priests, do not permit it. The poor people have no protection against the wiles and commands of the priesthood.

Of the greatest importance to every Hindu is *dana*, the act of giving alms and gifts to priests and high-caste Brahmans. It is the best investment in the life to come. No matter what sin one may have committed, if *dana* is big enough it is wiped out. The Brahmans, however, reap no such harvest to-day as they did in the old days in Udaipur. Then the rulers were weighed against gold and silver, and the heavier the Maharana the happier the Brahmans, for the gold or silver was distributed amongst the priests and their satellites.

When I was living in Mysore my gardener's child became very ill with dysentery, and I arranged for it to be taken to the Government hospital. As soon as the priest heard of the child's removal, he told the gardener that the goddess insisted upon the child being brought away from Christian influence. I tried to interfere, but it was useless. The child was taken back to its own quarters, where plague had developed while it was in hospital, and in its weakened condition it at once

contracted plague and succumbed within two days. After the death pollution, in his case a period of twenty days, the gardener returned. I gave him some money over the fence, and sent him back to his plague-infected home. If the goddess had not interfered, and the man had left the child in the hospital, I should have insisted upon him bringing his family, and staying in one of my go-downs. In that way I might have saved them all. But I could not compete with the threats of the Brahman priest, backed up by the goddess. In the gardener's eyes it was better to burn a candle, or make a sacrifice before some god in a foul-smelling temple, than to take medicine from an Untouchable.

One morning my bearer came to tell me that a high-caste Brahman beggar wished to see me. The beggar had refused to make his wants known through the servant. Intrigued, I went downstairs, and found the Brahman dressed in a finely embroidered *dhotie*, with a *chudda* (woollen shawl) over his shoulders. He had the bearing of a conqueror: his head thrown back, and a very insolent pair of eyes looking me up and down. His hands were clasped behind his back, the Brahman attitude of contempt for an inferior. He told me that he was going to take a second wife, and required money for the ceremony. I disillusioned him of the idea that I would consider it a privilege freely to assist him in the matter, and could not resist remarking that if he needed money he should earn it. I went so far as to mention a pile of wood before the cook-house in the compound, which had to be chopped into kindling for the kitchen fire, and to that his only answer was a sneer as he left, still keeping his hands behind his back. No doubt I lost all my chances for the next world by refusing to give the twice-born what he demanded.

On another occasion three Brahmans, belonging to a well-known Hindu society, came to my house when I was living in Bangalore. They told me all about the godhead and the illusion of the world. They told me how Siva was destroying the world at the present time, only to recreate it nearer his heart's desire. When they left, one of them tucked a letter into my hand. It was a begging letter. The man needed money, and as I had it, I should give it to him. He would not return it, the letter said, but he would repay me in service. What the service was to be I never discovered, for the money

was not forthcoming. To cure me of hardheartedness the Brahman tried magic. He was very naïve concerning the spell he was trying to work, coming to the house several times to inquire if I had any bad dreams. Did I dream that someone was trying to cut my throat ? Did I feel when I was sitting in a chair that someone stood behind me with a knife in his hand ? I, knowing this line of talk, told him that I was protected by a very powerful talisman I wore, which would cause the death of anyone who tried to injure me.

Brahmans are divided into several sects, according to their particular *veda*. The followers of the four *vedas* meet together at certain of their festivals. They wear the holy thread over their shoulders, and have a distinguishing caste mark. Certain of them are branded with hot irons on concealed parts of their bodies. The caste marks are worn on twelve regions of the body, but the mark we see is placed on the forehead between the eyebrows. Women of all sects use vermilion. The men draw lines down their foreheads from the line of their hair to a spot between the eyebrows. These designs indicate the god they worship. Thus, Vishnavite Brahmans draw two white lines, with a red line in the centre. The red line shows that woman has come between God and man.

To such an extent do Hindus defend their customs, that a Brahman told me in all seriousness that the caste mark had a hygienic value. It absorbed the evaporation that oozed from the body, and intercepted the sweat from the forehead before it could reach the eyes. The paste, from which the caste mark is made, is a mixture of cow-dung ashes, vermilion and sandal-paste.

In spite of the Brahmans' vehement denunciation of flesh eaters, certain sects eat flesh themselves. In *Manu* one finds a list of the animals, birds and fishes which a Brahman may eat. The meat-eating Brahmans usually come from the northern states, and they are shunned by the more orthodox Brahmans of the south. There is a sect which eats eggs and fish, but no meat. In theory, no Brahman will drink alcohol or look upon blood. In practice, if secrecy can be assured, many Brahmans will eat beef, or any other meat, and drink themselves into a fine state of insensibility. They are by far the worst offenders at the religious orgies.

Brahmans of Vedic days ate flesh, not excluding the flesh

of dogs. According to old records they had a most inhuman method of killing their animals, and in this slaughter they were assisted by the pot-makers' caste. Goats were killed and eaten in the following manner. The men appointed for the purpose rushed into the room where the unfortunate beast was tied. One grasped the forequarters of the animal to prevent it struggling, while another pressed its scrotum between his hands with such violence that the animal died in a few moments, after writhing in excruciating pain. The man grasping the forequarters then put a handful of salt in the creature's mouth, and held the jaws together. After which the carcass was taken to a shed, where with hands and knives the Brahmans peeled off the hide. The flesh was then hacked into pieces and boiled in a pot of water, and the moment it was cooked was devoured without salt or any seasoning whatever.

A Cherumar cannot enter a Brahman village, tank or temple. If he happens to enter a village, the whole village must be purified. A person to be purified has water, in which cow-dung has been stirred, poured on his feet, and milk poured on his head. Sometimes he must eat the five "sacred articles" of the cow. These articles include the saliva and the excrement.

To avoid polluting a Brahman, a Cherumar must leave the road at from thirty to ninety feet (the distance depends upon the district) before the approach of a Brahman. The Pulayas, a low caste of the south, must stand ninety feet from a Brahman.

Until quite recently, the Koragas were obliged to suspend a little pot from their necks to spit into, as their spittle polluted the highway where the Brahmans had to walk.

The artisan caste pollute a Brahman at thirty-six feet. It is a common sight in the south to see a leaf in the road with a stone on it. This means that a member of the lower castes is standing the required distance from a passing Brahman. Sometimes he is standing up to his waist in mud in a paddy field. If he puts no leaf down, he will call out to inform the Brahman that he is beyond polluting distance.

I myself used to buy my cigarettes at a small shop on the roadside, a short distance from Coimbatore. The Brahman boy passed me the cigarettes and the change on a wooden tray at arm's length.

If a Brahman accidentally enters the compound of an Untouchable, he must change his holy thread and eat the five products of the cow. If he happens to touch a cow which has just been delivered of a calf, he is utterly polluted and must fast.

A happy incident raised the Chembotti from a polluting to a non-polluting caste. According to the *Gazetteer* of Malabar, when the great temple at Taliparamba was completed, it was purified on a scale of unprecedented grandeur, no less than a thousand Brahmans being employed. What was their dismay, when the ceremony was well forward, to see a Chembotti coming from the *sri-kovil*, where he had been putting finishing touches to the roof. This appeared to involve a recommencement of the whole tedious and costly ritual, and the Brahmans gave vent to their feelings of despair. A vision, however, reassured them, and thereafter the Chembottis have been raised in the social scale, and are not regarded as a polluting caste.

The Chandala caste sprang from the union of a Brahman woman with a Sudra man. It is the lowest of the castes, the members of it being refuse-eaters. But such is Brahman superiority, that the mating of a Sudra woman with a Brahman man produced one of the highest of the lower castes.

Even the contempt the Brahman feels for the lower castes is not his worst infliction upon the down-trodden masses. They might support the contempt, did he not rob them of their substance. The Brahman must be paid when anyone of the lower castes has a wedding, dies, and when a child is born. If a member of a lower caste has committed a sin (i.e. forgotten to give something to a Brahman), he must feed as many Brahmans as he possibly can, for the length of time designated by the Brahmans. He must always subscribe to Brahman festivals, even if his family go hungry.

The wily-tongued Brahman can put up a show of servility, if he wants to worm his way into Palace positions, or posts in Government offices. Many of the Mohammedan princes employ Brahmans; and it has been known, pollution notwithstanding, that sodomy has been practised between the haughty worshipper of Siva or Vishnu and the beef-eating son of Islam. The Brahman is ever ready with flattery and applause, if it will assure his promotion and permit him to



hand out subordinate posts to his army of hangers-on. While when it comes to extorting money from the people, the Brahman can think of more schemes than a revenue officer.

Most of the work of collecting, book-keeping, translating, and the like, is done by Brahmans. They seem to have a talent for all clerical work. It behoves the European employing them to keep a strict watch over them, however, for no employee of a lesser caste would dream of reporting any dishonesty or double-dealing of a Brahman. Many Brahmans who have received an English education, and who occupy good posts in European offices, apparently lose their strict observances of caste. This loss is more apparent than actual, nevertheless.

Brahmans will choose a profession whenever possible, although there are many Brahmans in business. These last are often looked down upon by the former. Brahmans frequently go into the Army, but as courage is not their long suit, they are not fitted for such occupation. In war, I should imagine, the office of spy would be admirably suited to them. They themselves assert that anyone failing to keep a promise to them, will be born again as a vulture and have to eat human bodies.

Before the British rule in India, no Brahman was taxed. A Brahman can commit almost any crime in a Native state. He may suffer punishment, but not the extreme penalty. Brahman rulers will not send a Brahman to death.

Coming into contact with death seems to defile a Brahman more than anything. If he even hears of the death of a relative, it is necessary for him to purify himself. All inmates of a Brahman household are contaminated after a death has occurred, and much holy water (cow's urine) is used on such occasions.

Last summer the question arose at Kumbakonam as to whether a Brahman lady could be permitted to give evidence in court. The matter pertained to a dacoity<sup>1</sup> case, in which property valued at 10,000 rupees had been stolen. The robbery had been committed by a notorious dacoit named Kadirvelu Padayachi, who was shot soon after the crime. The lady in the case was the widow of the owner of the house where the crime had been committed, and no Brahman lady

<sup>1</sup> Robbery.

could think of making a public appearance within a year of her husband's death. Communications went back and forth between the Examining Magistrate and the local sub-Magistrate. The Magistrate did not care to consider the plan of sending someone to the lady to question her, and suggested that she should be interviewed *in camera* instead of in open court. This plan fell through, and it was finally decided that this lady would give evidence in her own residence, whither the Magistrate went to interview her.

Such is the power of the Brahman caste rules, that at the present day a woman cannot be summoned to appear in court for a year after her husband's death.

The inhuman consequence of caste superiority was demonstrated last May in Pattuk-kottai, Tanjore district. It was raining, and many people took shelter in the verandah of the Taluk offices. Three men, it was soon discovered, belonged to the Adi-Dravidas. The men of higher caste, not wishing to be polluted, insisted upon the Adi-Dravidas leaving the verandah and sheltering under a tamarind tree. While they were sitting on the ground under the tree, the tree was struck by lightning and one of them was instantly killed. The other two were injured, and were taken to the hospital.

A case occurred last June at Allahabad, in which the Judge of the High Court was called upon to restrict the vicious tendencies of a member of the elect. The offender, who had been sentenced on the charge of grievous hurt, appealed. He had asked his washerwoman to go to his home for his dirty linen, but being busy with her household work at the time the request was made, the woman told him that she would fetch his linen in the evening. This delay, however, did not meet his wishes, and he kicked the woman. Two other women, hearing her cries, intervened. One of them was so badly kicked in the abdomen that she died of her injuries. The Judge, evidently more disturbed by the man's autocratic attitude than by his crime, remarked that he should be taught that he was not the Czar of Russia.

A strange custom exists in certain of the southern temples. It is one of these customs which Indians tell you have been discontinued, but in reality still go on. There are many such customs.

A woman of any of the four higher castes, Brahman,

Kashatriya, Vaisya, or Sudra, if she is a widow, or if she is weary of her husband, may go to a temple and eat some of the food placed before the idol ; after which, she is judged by certain members of her caste. If she is a Brahman, she is permitted to live in the temple or outside its precincts. If she decides to remain in the temple, she gets her allowance of rice and her piece of cloth, her costume. Her duties are sweeping the temple, fanning the god and cohabiting with the Brahmans ; chiefly, the latter. If she is segregated by one Brahman, and she gives her favours to another, she may be severely flogged. Her male children are called Moylar, and are permitted to wear the Brahmanical thread. These children are employed to scatter cow-dung about the temple, and to place food before the idols.

To excuse their filthy habits and their extreme cruelty, Brahmans say that Untouchables cannot be admitted into the higher castes because they eat beef. However, the poor Untouchable eats beef openly ; not behind closed doors, during some disgusting orgy, like the Brahmans.

I quote the following nonsense, which cluttered up one of the newspapers in south India last year. It was written by a certain M. K. Acharya. He naïvely places his religion on the steady continuance of the bovine species, and heads the part of the article which I quote "Quack Doctoring." ". . . Yes ; this is our misfortune—doctoring by quacks, if not knaves, who do not care to know what the disease is " (he refers to Untouchability). " Now if Dr. Moonje and other vocal patrons of the Untouchables will know the truth, here it is. These Untouchables are people who for generations have been guilty of professional cow-killing . . . and other sins. It was not a disgrace but the glory of Sanatana Dharma in the old days that it practised what it preached—and treated cow-killers and beef-eaters as social and religious Untouchables. And it was the glory of the self-same Sanatana Dharma to have declared, nay, demonstrated, that the worst cow-killer by birth, if he relinquished his sinful pursuits, and took to God-love, could verily become a saint ; and so it is that the images of not a few who though born Untouchables yet became true God-lovers and are to this day kept in Hindu temples and worshipped.

" Here lies the right Dharmic " (the right behaviour for

Hindus) "solution to Untouchability. On the other hand, the Gandhian diagnosis is as false as the Gandhian remedy is diabolical. For it is not to encourage "devotional worship" among Untouchables, but to pull down the higher castes and break their supposed tyranny that the entry of Untouchables into temples is demanded. So, unless Dr. Moonje and his so-called Hindu Mahasabha hold that cow-killing or habitual beef-eating is no sin in Hinduism, their appeal in the first instance should be to the Untouchables to give up their sinful habits. When any large number of Untouchables thus become pure and are willing to take to the path of God-love, Orthodox Hindus will be only too ready to open to them their temple gates. And this is the Orthodox prayer to the reformers: 'Do what you like in your worldly politics; but do not interfere with our religious ideals. . . .'

"It will be less woeful if Dharmic Hindus are physically swept out of existence than if Hinduism be degraded, and its Dharmic ideals overthrown. We do not, however, fear any such catastrophe. We have faith in the final triumph of Truth and Righteousness. We believe in the Conquest of the World by India's spirituality, by 'dynamic Hinduism.'"

One has only to read such articles, to see what would happen if the Government of India's future passed into the hands of Brahmans. Imagine a world conquered by "India's spirituality" and by "Dynamic Hinduism"!

So far as opening the temple gates to the Untouchables is concerned, that condescension exists already. Anyone may pass through the gates. I have no idea if the writer's mention of the gates was intentional or accidental; but we may be sure that any Untouchable taking on "God-love," and giving up his predilection for "cow-killing," would not pass through any other entrance but the gate!

The writer shows a lamentable ignorance of his country when he advises to get on with politics and leave religion alone. India is a land which has no history. The entry of Darius into the Punjab in 500 B.C., and the coming of Alexander with his short-lived Greek power to the north, made no real impression, and it is really with Chandragupta and his famous line that anything began to happen in India which might be called history. Such history, however, was based upon idolatry and superstition, and before any progress in

politics can be hoped for, the prevailing element of superstition must go.

Not one step forward can be made in India while Hinduism, like a great snake, is allowed to crawl over the country, soiling every decent ideal and poisoning with its venom the bodies and souls of millions of people. To try to do anything constructive for India, as she is, is madness on which only governments such as ours would spend their time and money. India is contemporaneous with early Greece and Rome. She has no place in the world to-day.

## II

### SOUTHERN BRAHMANS

The Brahmans of Southern India are divided into several sections, differing in language and customs. These are only surface differences, however, for Brahmans are Brahmans no matter what part of India they occupy. The Brahmans of the north, because of association with Western people, and the advantages of Western education, seem to be more in line with evolutionary progress than are the more orthodox Brahmans of the south. But the old adage (scratch a Russian and you will find a Tartar) will apply with certain variations to almost any member of the Brahmanic caste. Scratch a Brahman and you will find the overbearing Hindu, whose almightiness rests on the degradation of the entire Indian mass, whose life is maintained by the blood and toil of millions of slaves, whose subterranean scuttling is undermining the foundation of India, and whose creed is the only barrier to the freedom of a persecuted race.

In the more important religious rites the Brahmans of south India follow the teachings of the Vedas. All religious rites are performed according to Vedic laws. As a whole, the southern division can be grouped into two sects, the Pancha Dravidas and the Pancha Gaudas.

The Pancha Dravidas are vegetarians, but the Pancha Gaudas are permitted to eat flesh if they like. Many of the latter, however, do not touch meat openly, because they dislike the criticism of the vegetarian group. They worship either Siva or Vishnu, but with many variations which lesser castes do not observe. Both Pancha Dravidas and Pancha

Gaudas recognise their gods as separate deities, but believe that they will finally be absorbed into the infinite spirit. Sometimes an exception is made of Siva, who is not likely to lose his personality.

One learns from a very wordy and tiresome harangue in the sacred writings that Brahmans believe in but one god, with any number of representatives. The principal idea in Brahman religion is to gain spiritual supremacy over all other lines of thought. The Brahman must be purified, to remove the taint of the womb through which he entered the world. And the girl at puberty must attend a ceremony in which Vishnu is supplicated to prepare her womb for the birth of Brahmans.

A woman is supposed, if possible, to produce a male child. In fact, there is a male-producing ceremony during the seventh month, before and during which the pregnant woman fasts. In this rite the husband stands before his wife holding a branch of a *figus bengalensis* on which hang two fruits. The fruits represent testicles. The husband squeezes a little juice from one of the fruits into his wife's nostrils, saying, "You are a male child." He then takes a porcupine quill, which has been passed through the sacred fire, and parts her hair with it.

When the baby is born some honey and *ghi* are smeared on his tongue. He is recommended to the gods with the hope that he will live a hundred years. At the naming ceremony his name is whispered in his ear, and the gods are entreated to give him wisdom and semen. The child's head is shaved when he is a few months old, one lock of hair being left by which the gods can lift him into heaven.

When the boy is old enough, at about the age of fourteen, he is taken to his *guru* (spiritual teacher). He sits before the sacred fire in the home of the *guru* and grass is suspended over his head with its tips extended towards the cardinal points. Again his head is shaved ; this time by the *guru*, who chants certain *mantrams* and prays for long life for the boy.

After shaving, the boy bathes and more closely approaches the sacred fire. A grinding-stone is placed near the fire. The boy treads on it, while the *guru* recites : "Tread on this stone, and may you be as firm as it is. May you subdue your enemies."

The boy puts on a new *dhotie*, and the *guru* sings the praises of the gods and pleads with them to clothe the boy for a hundred years. A girdle of woven grass is then wound three times round the boy's body, and knotted over his navel. After more prayers and chanting, a piece of deer-skin is tied to the sacred thread which the boy is wearing. The *guru* meanwhile recites from the Vedas : " Oh skin, which is full of lustre because Mitra sees you, full of glory, and one that is not fit for wicked people, I am putting you on. May Aditi tuck up your garment. Thou mayst read Vedas and grow wise. Thou mayst not forget what thou hast read. Mayst thou become holy and glorious."

The boy then says : " I have come near the spiritual teacher. May the teacher and myself become famous. May I complete my Vedic studies properly, and let me be blessed with married life after study." The *guru* then sprinkles water on the boy's hands, and calls upon all the gods to take care of him.

After a long discussion, during which each god is spoken to separately, the boy throws some *ghi* on the sacred fire. A cloth is put over the boy and the teacher, and the boy asks the teacher to recite the Savitri. The *guru* complies with the boy's request, after which the boy then worships the sun and the ceremony is brought to an end by the boy begging rice from his female relations.

The sacred thread which the boy wears is not of ordinary cotton, but of three strands of cotton woven for the purpose and taken from special bolls. Ordinarily, the thread is worn over the left shoulder. At ceremonies for the dead it is worn over the right shoulder.

The boy is married when he has completed his Vedic studies. The Brahman marriage is of long duration. The length of the time varies somewhat, according to the district. On the first day of the ceremony Vedic verses are recited, the bridegroom being seated on a board in the midst of the assembled Brahmans. The bride's father tells the relatives and friends that he will give his daughter to the bridegroom.

For this occasion the bridegroom leaves to shave and dress in a new *dhotie*. When he returns, he must go all through the recitation of the religious ceremony. He is helped through this tiresome performance by his spiritual teacher, or by his

father. *Ghi*, by being poured on the fire, is offered to the gods, and after that, the service to ancestors is performed. Next, the bridegroom dresses as a married man, and goes on a mock pilgrimage. He carries with him an umbrella and a parcel containing rice and areca nut. His father-in-law meets him, and takes him to the house at which the marriage is to be celebrated.

As soon as he arrives, the bride is brought in. She exchanges garlands with the bridegroom. The couple then sit together within the *pandal* (temporary structure), while songs are sung. In some districts the couple sit on a swing, which is suspended from the poles supporting the structure. Married women pass round the couple several times, carrying fruits, water, light and betel-nut.

After this the couple are taken into the house, and seated on the marriage dais. The true ceremony is then commenced. A priest chants endless verses and Vedic texts. The bride and bridegroom should belong to different divisions of the caste. When the chanting is finished, the seed-pan ceremony is proceeded with. Five earthen pans are arranged in the form of a square; four facing the cardinal points, and one in the centre. The pans represent different gods. The pan at the eastern point represents Indra, the one at the west Varuna, the one at the south Yama, and the one at the north Soman. Water is sprinkled over the pots, while the various names of the gods (all Indian gods have a longish list of names) are chanted.

The tying of the wrist-thread is the next item. Two threads are laid on the pot representing Varuna. After another interminable number of Vedic verses, the bridegroom takes one of the threads, smears it with tumeric paste, and ties it on the left wrist of the bride. The priest ties the other thread on the right wrist of the bridegroom, who faces the assembly and says: "I am going to take the bride." The friends bless the couple, and the bride's father says that he is prepared to give his daughter to the bridegroom. The father of the bride washes the feet of the bridegroom, which are placed on a tray. For this operation milk and water are used. The bridegroom, with the same liquids, returns the compliment and washes the feet of the bride's father. The father places his daughter's hand in that of the bridegroom, and he and the



bride's mother pour water over the hands of the couple. The father then recites : " I am giving you a virgin decorated with jewels, that I may obtain religious merit."

The bridegroom takes the bride by the hand, and both sit before the sacred fire. After much further reciting of texts and pouring of water, the bride's father again washes the feet of the bridegroom. The bridegroom chants a verse : " Oh water, unite me with fame, splendour, and milk. Make me beloved of all creatures, the lord of cattle. May fame, heroism, and energy dwell in me. To the ocean I send you imperishable waters. Go back to your source. May I not suffer loss in my offspring. May my sap not be shed." The bride's father then gives the bridegroom honey and fruit. The bridegroom eats it, with the words : " I eat thee for the sake of brilliancy, power, and luck."

The bridegroom is presented with a cocoanut and a banana. He shares the banana with the bride, and says : " Oh, Varuna, bless her with wealth. May there be no ill-feeling between herself, her brothers and sisters. Oh, Brihaspathi, bless her that she may not lose her husband. Oh, Indra, bless her to be fertile. Oh, Savitha, bless her that she may be happy in all respects. Oh, girl, be gentle and friendly to me. Let your look be of such a nature as not to kill me. May you shine with lustre and be of good repute. Live long and bear living children."

The bridegroom next takes a piece of grass, passes it between the girl's eyebrows, and throws it behind her, saying : " With this I remove the evil influence of any bad mark which is likely to cause widowhood." The bridegroom then turns to the relations and friends, and says : " Now they should rejoice and not cry. They have arranged our union to bring happiness to us. In view of our happiness they should be glad. This is the occasion to rejoice."

Four Brahmans bring water. The bridegroom receives it with the words : " May the evil qualities of this water disappear ; may it increase. Let the Brahmans bring water for the bath, and may it bring long life and children to her."

A yoke is brought (in some districts this is not observed), one end of which is placed on the bride's head. The following is chanted by the priest : " Oh, Indra, cleanse and purify this girl, just as you did in the case of Abhala, by pouring

water through the three holes." A gold coin, the *tali* (marriage badge), is dropped into the hole of the yoke, and the priest continues : " May this gold prove a blessing to you. May the hole of the yoke bring happiness to you." Then the bridegroom, as he sprinkles water over the coin, says : " May you become purified by the sun and the water. May this water, which is the cause of the thunder and the lightning, bring happiness to you."

The bride puts on a new *sari*, and the gods are beseeched repeatedly to give her children and health. When this long tirade ends, the bridegroom takes the bride's right wrist with his left hand and passes his right hand over the united hands and wrist three times. This is considered the most binding and important part of the ceremony.

The bridegroom then lifts the bride's left foot seven times, as he repeats : " One step for sap, may Vishnu go after thee. Two steps for juice, may Vishnu go after thee. Three steps for vows, may Vishnu go after thee. Four steps for comfort, may Vishnu go after thee. Five steps for cattle, may Vishnu go after thee. Six steps for wealth, may Vishnu go after thee. Seven steps for those who preside at sacrifices, may Vishnu go after thee. With seven steps we have become companions. May I attain to friendship with thee. May I not be separated from that friendship. Let us be united. Let us take counsel together. May we grow in strength and prosperity. Now we are one in minds, deeds, and desires. Thou art Rik and I am Samam. I am the sky, thou art the earth. I am the semen, thou art the bearer. I am the mind, thou art the tongue. Follow me faithfully, that we may have wealth and children."

The help of the gods is thereupon again sought. They are implored to give the bride not less than ten children ; not to let the man's seed be wasted or his virility to lapse. The girl treads on a stone, while the bridegroom says that just so will she tread on her enemies. Then, after more *ghi* has been poured on the fire, more water has been poured, more milk has been spilled ; when, in fact, the whole place is sticky and slimy, and smells like the nest of a carrion bird, the Brahmans disperse and leave the couple to the boredom of waiting for the drama to continue.

In the evening everybody returns and the same performance, with variations, is enacted again. An address to the

planets, after the pole-star has been pointed out to the couple, takes the place of the seed-pan ceremony.

On the fourth night the couple sit on the same mat, but a stick is placed between them. *Arati* (the lamp to keep off the evil eye) is waved at intervals during the entire ceremony. One night wooden dolls are brought, and the bride and bridegroom play at keeping house and rearing their children.

On the last day the bride says, looking at the bridegroom : " With a loving heart I regard thee. Fill me with a child, and our house with wealth. Thou art desirous of a son. Thou shalt reproduce thyself." The bridegroom answers : " I see thee radiant and eager to be filled with a child by me. Thou art in thy youth now. Enjoy me therefore while I am over thee and reproduce myself, being desirous of a son. May the Viswe gods unite our hearts, and may Sarasvati teach us the conversation appropriate to the occasion of our intercourse. Prajapathi enter my body that I may have vigour during the act. Thou, Thvashtri, who fashionest forms with Vishnu and other gods ; thou, Indra, who grantest boons with thy friends the Viswedevas, by thy blessing may we have sons. May Vishnu make thy womb ready, may Thvashtri shape the child, may Prajapathi pour forth the semen ; may Dhatri give thee conception. Give conception, Sinivali ; give conception, Sarasvati. May the two Asvins, wreathed with lotus, give conception to thee. The embryo which the two Asvins produce with their golden sticks, that embryo we call into thy womb ; that thou mayst give birth to it after ten months. As the earth is pregnant with Agni ; as the heaven is pregnant with Indra ; as Vayu dwells in the womb of the earth, thus I place an embryo in thy womb. Open thy womb ; take in the semen. May a male child, an embryo, be begotten in thy womb. The mother bears him ten months ; may he be born, most valiant of his kin. May a male embryo enter the womb, as an arrow the quiver ; may a man be born after ten months. I do the work to thee which is sacred to Prajapathi ; may an embryo enter thy womb. May a child be born without deformity ; with all its limbs, not blind, not lame, not sucked out by devils."

The ceremony closes with this recitation. The wrist threads are removed, and the seeds from the pans are thrown into a tank.

The Brahmans speak of the period of gestation requiring ten months. No doubt in the old Vedic records time was not reckoned by our present scale.

The Brahman is continuously imploring the gods to give him a son. The welfare of his soul depends upon a son officiating at his funeral ceremony. Brahmans who have no male issue usually adopt the son of some relation. The Brahman considers his son before anyone in the world. His wife and daughters but furnish a background for his son.

After a son is born, a Brahman may do anything he wishes. He may become an ascetic, and leave his wife and family for a life of meditation in the forest. He may sit under a tree, reciting the blessed word *om* until his legs are paralysed from disuse (this is possible if he has a disciple to pass the begging bowl), his hair full of lice, and his body covered with sores. The son will see to his soul's rest, and nothing else is of any importance. But woe betide the Brahman who has become an ascetic out of turn. This bliss is only permitted him after he has taken a wife and begotten a son. Ascetics, who have desired to progress too rapidly, have returned with all haste from forest meditation when some vision has disclosed to them the fate which awaits them without a son.

A Brahman is superstitious about taking a third wife. It is believed that she will become a widow. To avoid this calamity, he marries the arka plant (*calotropis gigantea*, believed by Indians to be the oldest plant in the world), and his marriage with the woman becomes his fourth marriage. The bridegroom, a priest, and a friend go on an auspicious day to a place where the weed grows. The friend, during the ceremony, is regarded as the father-in-law, and the plant is addressed with *mantrams*, verses, and chants. After the marriage the plant is cut down.

This plant is supposed to catch some property from the sun. Formerly, the Hindus applied its leaves to their foreheads when the sun was in a certain position; now it is a scapegoat for disease. A person suffering from some illness has simply to tie a lock of his hair, or a rag from his clothing, on to the plant, and it takes on his ailment and withers. "May the arka grow at thy door," is a curse that is frequently used. Once, it was customary to place adulterers on an ass facing the tail. Garlands of arka leaves were placed on their

heads, and they were marched through the streets. To crush the plant under foot is to win merit. Sometimes a wreath of arka leaves is placed round the neck of a corpse, and mud taken from the roots of the plant is made into balls and placed under the knees. If for some reason an elder brother cannot marry, he enacts a mock marriage under a *pandal* which is covered with arka leaves. This marriage enables the second son to become the head of the family.

To-day many Brahmans, especially those living in cities, disregard the ceremonies of their forefathers, with the exception of the death ceremonies and the thread ceremony. No Brahman dares to ignore these. The neglect of many ceremonies is caused by economic conditions ; as is the present curtailment of wives. Many Brahmans are forced to forgo inclinations, and to take no second wife if the first one can produce a son.

When a Brahman is about to die, he is taken from his bed and placed on the ground. This is one of the reasons why the foreign hospitals have not been the success they were supposed to be in India. Not that a high-caste Brahman would care to go to a Christian hospital in any case ; but there are many castes who observe (in so far as possible) the Brahman customs.

The spirit of the dying Brahman is supposed to escape through one of the several orifices of the body. If he has led an upright life, the spirit leaves through the top of the skull. If he has not propitiated his gods sufficiently, his spirit leaves by the rectum. Immediately after death the body is washed, and certain marks are outlined on the forehead with sandal-paste. The sacred fire is lighted, and if death has occurred at midnight, or during an evil hour, purification rites are performed. If the angel of death visited the family at a fortunate moment, the brothers are not shaved (unless it was father or mother who passed on) on the same day. The women are supposed loudly to lament and sing the death-songs. If the dead person was wealthy, hired mourners are engaged to keep up a continuous noise. The noisier the mourning, the more swiftly evil influences will vanish. In certain southern districts (this could never happen in the north) widows are engaged as professional mourners.

On the way to the burning ground, rice is strewn on the



ONE OF THE TORTURES OF TAIPUSAN. THE IRON NEEDLES ARE INSERTED UNDER THE RIBS. THEY SUPPORT WOODEN BARS. (See page 38)



pathway to propitiate earth-bound spirits. The body must be placed on the ground some time during its removal to the burning ground, while prayers are said for the departed. In some places this habit is not allowed by the Government. When the corpse is placed on the funeral pyre, a piece of money is placed in its hand and the nine orifices of the body are smeared with *ghi*.

The son, or the man who is the chief mourner, lights a torch from the sacred fire and ignites the pyre. He then circles the pyre three times, with a pot on his shoulders. The pot has holes in the bottom, so that water may trickle out. At the end of the third turn, he throws the pot down and squats on the ground. This is the cue for all relatives to squat and chant Vedic verses. Presently the chief mourner rises and sprinkles himself with a little water. After that they all rise and look towards the sun, and then sprinkle themselves with water and march off to the tank where they bathe.

When they return to the house, they perform a rite for clothing the departed spirit. Two stones are set up, one in the house and the other on the bank of the tank. For ten days libations of water and gingelly seeds are offered to the stones. There must be seventy-five libations. Much cooked rice is offered to the departed spirit, who for some reason is supposed to be very hungry.

On the tenth day the widow is divested of her jewels and her head is shaved. During the ten days in which the family have been under pollution, according to the Garuda Purana a body has been constructed for the spirit, in which covering it travels to its next abode. On the first day it was furnished with a head ; on the second, with a neck and shoulders ; on the third, with a heart ; on the fourth, with a back ; on the fifth, with a navel ; on the sixth, with generative organs ; on the seventh, with thighs, on the eighth and ninth, with knees and feet. On the thirteenth day it is conducted to what corresponds to our heaven or hell.

Yama, the god of death, has a list of tortures for the hell-bound spirit which makes Dante's inferno seem like a bedtime story for children. The poor spirit must cover a distance of 86,000 leagues with a speed (and he must travel on foot) of 200 leagues a day. During the journey he has neither rest nor food nor water. In one place he is scorched by the heat



of twelve suns at the meridian ; at another he is pierced with icy cold winds ; at still another his body is rent by thorns. Lions, tigers, serpents, and scorpions attack him ; he traverses a forest whose leaves are swords ; he falls into a pit of iron spikes, where leeches and other vermin with intimate intentions crawl over him. He has to cross a river composed of matter and hair infested with filthy birds of prey. The goal of the upward-bound spirit is simply a place where the spirit's life upon earth is examined. Lessons learned on earth will be used in future incarnations. Mistakes will be looked into, and corrected, for future use.

An orthodox Brahman, who observes his daily ceremonies to the letter, has no time to attend to anything else. Every moment of the day is taken up with some rite. Only a few Brahmans, living in the villages, can regulate their lives so as to be able to comply with the worship of their gods as recommended in the Vedas. Every act has its rite, even the brushing of the teeth.

It is easy, therefore, to see why Brahmans can do little work, and why they force lower castes to do all the menial services for them. There are few things they can touch without pollution. In former times their women had to follow them so many paces from their dwelling, to wipe their posteriors with clay after evacuation. I do not actually know of any place where this last rite is done to-day ; but I would not be astonished to find it cropping up in some remote village.

The southern Brahman holds woman in about the same contempt as his northern brother. Why should she not be content to have the food left by the great god, Male ? The god does not see that this degraded creature has the care of his lordly person during his impressionable years. He wonders why his sons are so frequently mediocre ; but he fails to appreciate that the insignificant creature has ultimately defeated him. If only she had intelligence enough to laugh !

Most Brahmans practise Yoga. Even the city man tries to find time for the control of his breath ; since this is supposed to subdue the emotions and create peace. Pranayama, or holding in the breath in three separate operations, is practised daily. This movement is followed by Puraka ; pressing the right nostril with the fingers and drawing in the breath

through the left nostril, and alternately by inhaling through the left and exhaling through the right. Kumbhaka is the next in turn, and consists of pressing both nostrils with finger and thumb, and holding the breath as long as possible.

The Yoga breathing is followed by internal and external purification. Sprinkling himself with water, the worshipper says : " I desire the removal of all sins that have adhered to me." Drinking water from the palm of his hand, he repeats : " Oh, water, the source of all comfort, grant us food so that our senses may grow strong and give us joy. Make us recipients of your essence, which is the most blissful. May we obtain enough of that essence of yours, the existence of which within you makes you feel glad. Oh, waters, give us offspring. May the sun and anger, may the lords of anger, preserve me from my sins of pride and passion. Whatever the nightly sins of thought, word, deed, wrought by my mind, my speech, my hands, my feet ; wrought through my appetite and sensual organs. Oh, radiant sun, I offer up myself, and this my guilt." This is said in the morning. The evening service is the same, with the word " fire " used instead of " sun."

The midday service is as follows : " May the waters purify the earth by pouring down rain. May the purified earth, thus purified, make us pure. May the waters purify my spiritual preceptor, and may the Veda purify me. Whatever leavings of another's food (his wife needs no purification for having eaten the scraps off his plate), and whatever impure things I have eaten ; whatever I have received as a gift from the unworthy (no gift is refused, purification can always follow acceptance), may the waters destroy all that sin and purify me. For this purpose, I pour this sanctified water as a libation down my throat." Such ceremonies take but a few minutes, and almost any Brahman can find time for them.

The mystic symbol *om* is the most sacred of all utterances. It contains the universe ; because in it resides the essence of the supreme beings, Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva. It is chanted before, and after, every sacrifice. I have heard it in Western drawing-rooms, intoned by slender ascetics from the East while their audience fairly swooned in awe of the holy word.

Pious Brahmans worship Siva and Vishnu and their consorts (really the essence of the gods themselves), Lakshmi

and Parvati. A part of the Brahman house is usually set apart for worship, and where symbols of the gods are kept. The collection consists of five stones : a *salagrama* (the legend of this famous stone is told in the chapter on legends), representing Vishnu ; *bana linga*, a white stone representing Siva ; red jasper representing Ganesha (the elephant-headed god) : a piece of metallic ore representing Parvati, or a *lingam* representing Siva ; and a pebble representing the sun.

Every Brahman has a tulsi plant, usually in a pot. The plant is worshipped because it represented a nymph who was loved by Krishna. It is watered daily with ceremony, and sometimes it achieves considerable size. Beads are made from the plant's stem, and these are used as rosaries to count the recitations of a deity's name. In one of its incarnations the tulsi plant took the form of a woman, and married Dwarka. One sees here the gardens of Adonis of the Greeks ; as Plutarch describes them, " the gardens of Adonis in earthen pots and pans." In the Brahman temples, into which only Brahmans can enter, the worship is dedicated to Siva and Vishnu. The duties connected with the ceremonials are carried out by Gurukkals in the Siva temples, and by Vaikhanasa Archakas in the Vishnu temples.

The cooking of the daily food, the offering for the gods, is done by Brahmans. During the worship they recite the Vedas. There are two idols in the temples, one of stone and one of metal. In the larger temples there is a separate building dedicated to Lakshmi. In the Siva temples, where the *lingam* rests, there is a feeble light which burns continuously. A common saying, to excuse anything obscure, is " as dim as Siva's temple."

The temple service is much the same as the service in the homes. The larger temples are well-endowed, but some temples receive help from the Government. The temples are managed by directors, who control the temple funds out of which temple servants (sweepers, musicians, and dancing girls) are paid. When the idol has finished with the food, it is distributed among the servants. The dancing girls no longer pay their earnings over to the priest, unless they wish to do so. The Brahmans sometimes employ the Nakle, or devil dancers. It is still believed that a devil who has possessed someone can be danced out. After worship in the

temples, the worshippers are given tulsi leaves (if it is a Vishnu temple), or belva leaves (if it is a Siva temple), holy water (cow's urine), and sacred ashes.

During the month of May, the festival of the god Varadaraja takes place, and lasts for ten days. The god goes through a disgusting marriage ceremony, after which it is placed on a decorated car and dragged through the streets. The car is covered with the most obscene carvings, which are supposed to avert the evil eye.

The Vattimans, a caste division of southern Brahmans, are rather communistic. They sometimes use a corporate purse for the light and drainage (of a very crude kind, indeed) of their villages. The community ideas, however, do not signify an advance in education when compared with other divisions.

The Dikshitars, who live at Chidambaram, are called the three thousand. As legend has it: three thousand people went to Benares, and when they arrived, there was one missing. Suddenly Siva appeared, and told them that he was the missing one. He advised them to live at Chidambaram, and to admit no member of another division into their sect. They are, consequently, very limited in number, and do not permit their women to leave their village. Marriage takes place very early with the Dikshitars, and it is almost impossible to obtain a marriageable girl over five years of age. Matrimony is important, as no unmarried individual can have anything to do with temple affairs, and, what is more, cannot claim a share in the temple income. Most of the men of this division are priests of one sort or another. They go about other districts begging for their temple. Their benefactors are given ashes and cow-dung in exchange for alms. These men have a very haughty bearing, and consider themselves equal to Siva, as he is one of them. When a girl attains puberty she goes, after purification, to the home of every Dikshitar in the community, where she receives a present.

The Prathamaskis are called the midday Brahmans for the following reason. The god of one of the temples was entreated by a *pujari* (temple priest) to attend a festival, which was to be given in his, the god's, honour. The god accepted the invitation, but said that he might come in some hideous shape. On the day of the festival he appeared as a pariah (an Untouchable), with cow meat on his back. He

was followed by the five Vedas, in the form of dogs. All the Brahmans who were present ran away, and the god was so angry that he cursed them. One hour every day, from twelve till one, they are supposed by the curse to stay outside their houses, and to purify themselves afterwards. Not one of them, however, will observe the pollution, and consequently orthodox Brahmans will not eat with them.

Certain divisions of the Brahman caste are always quarrelling with each other. For example, the Thengalais and the Vadagalais (Tamil-speaking Brahmans) try to reach salvation by different routes, their worship of the same gods notwithstanding. One branch believes that by exertion of will the highest plane is reached; the other branch is fatalistic.

The Thengalais abjure their widows to eat neither sweets nor betel-nut; to wear no flowers or jewels; and to engage in neither conversation nor sexual intercourse. Above all things, they are forbidden to cut their hair (unlike other widows, who are shaved), as hell awaits them if their hair has been so much as trimmed. The hairless widow remains in hell for a thousand years, and her rash act causes hair to grow in the mouths of her ancestors' ghosts. Her tortures do not cease with her thousand years' sojourn in hell. She will be reborn in a low caste, either sweepers or pariahs.

In many cases the widows amongst southern Brahmans are treated as badly as the northern widows. It is considered unlucky to see them, especially for men or pregnant women. But I have known of many widows, where education has entered the families, being treated during recent years much better than formerly. This is not saying much, however, as the belief that the sins of the widow's previous life caused her husband's death, is so deeply rooted in the Brahman caste. Even the highly educated are tainted with this superstition, although they would not dream of admitting it.

The Brahmans of Malabar are not so hide-bound in the actions of daily life as Brahmans in other parts of India. They live with women of the Nair caste, and seem quite content with their "wives" and their children. The Malabar Brahmans, nevertheless, cannot be judged entirely by their daily deportment. They never get very far from the old superstitions, as is shown by their funeral rites. One legend

will do as well as another to explain why there are Brahmans in Malabar. It is said that Rama claimed as much land from the sea as he could cover by hurling his battle-axe from the top of the western hills. The reclaimed land was then given to the Brahmans.

## CHAPTER V

### CASTES. (HILL TRIBES)

#### BADAGAS

##### I

ONE thing is certain, the caste system is doomed. It is to be hoped that it will die gracefully, from a change in Hindu thought. There can be no adapting of caste rules to present-day environment ; there can be no return to the conditions which brought caste into being.

It will be difficult for the Hindu to realize that what he believes to be a holy, differentiated grading of men, originated in the minds of Brahman priests, to keep the people in a pitiful state of subjection. There is a Sanskrit saying to the effect that greatness is heightened by looking upon something much lower than itself. This is, perhaps, truer in India than in any country in the world. Each Indian must feel a little superior to some other Indian, and this fact is responsible for the survival of the caste system. Give an Indian a little power, and he becomes intoxicated with his own importance. If he can put a B.A. after his name, he looks down on all and sundry.

Leaving out of consideration the rules of the caste system, much of the present-day superiority is founded upon a defence mechanism. The Christian occupation has aroused antagonism by its aloofness. It preaches to the Indian across impregnable social barriers. It is true that the Christian cannot associate with Hindus, owing to the strict rules of caste. On the other hand, when the Hindu is converted to the Christian faith, he comes into no more intimate association with his fellow-believers.

The Christian converts come mostly from the lower castes, and it can be argued that any status they reach by accepting Christianity is better than the Hindu status from which they

emerged. But Hindus of higher castes point to these Christian conversions, and compare them with Moslem conversions. Every Mohammedan is a brother, and is treated as a brother. This fact causes the higher-caste Hindu to remark that Christian intimacy is halted by the colour-bar. Personally I do not believe that colour has anything to do with it. There are many other factors which could be brought into the argument. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the Hindu feels the necessity, based on false reasoning no doubt, to defend his self-respect.

Ghandi is an example of such defence. His sensibilities were very much hurt by the English in Africa, and resentment burning in him, a dull red flame, eventually ignited the boycott in India. The torch which set off the present unrest was lighted by personal vanity, and its very origin carries its defeat.

The caste system, by its very nature, tends to isolate India from the rest of the world. And such a position, even if India desires it, is impossible to-day. Hermit nations are of the past, yet India is surrounded by barriers to progressive ideas. She cannot meet people of other nations as human beings, but as creatures whose shadow, falling across her food, will pollute it. Her women, the mothers of her sons, are so degraded by prejudice as to be rendered unfit for any social intercourse. Her economic condition is appalling, because one caste must for ever prey upon another. Any individual emancipation is out of the question, for caste overcomes all initiative. The idea of exclusiveness is so intensified, that one caste cannot even marry into one of its own sub-divisions.

The question has been raised as to what would become of the countless millions if caste was abolished. I think a beginning could be made by turning the castes into trade unions, with all superiority and inferiority excluded. Let each union follow its trade, much as it does now so far as its work is concerned, and let no one trade prey upon another. After all, there is nothing which divides a blacksmith from a carpenter but his tools. India must recover from her feudal habits. In the minds of the Indians, the idea exists of protector and protected. But this condition is quite fallacious, since by no stretch of imagination can one picture the Brahmans as protectors.



Those who hold on to Indian culture, would do well seriously to think upon this question. Hinduism has not absorbed caste ; it is caste which has absorbed Hinduism. For that very reason Hinduism is doomed. It stands now as the buffer between Christianity and Mohammedanism, and, of necessity, must disappear when these two virile forces stand face to face unless, by some sensible change in thought and practice, it becomes a force to be reckoned with.

In Hindu thought, the Godhead created the Brahman from his mouth ; the Kashattriya from his arms ; the Vaishiya from his thighs ; and the Shudra from his feet. All lower castes, not partaking of some part of the divine body, are beneath the contempt of the greater four. There is nothing very spiritual about this physical god with his arms and thighs. He is, rather, a monstrosity in this day of progressive religions.

It may be said by the Hindus that I would offer Christianity as a panacea for India's ills. But the fact is I hold no brief for Christianity. It has been a splendid instrument of evolution, in so far as it has not interfered with progress. Theosophy, also, which is so very popular in India, is as weighted with superstition and inchoate and indefinite practices as Hinduism. Some of its initiates are self-styled clairvoyants, who work under the direction of "Masters." The "Masters" are frequently departed spirits, who return and fasten themselves to some brilliant pupil that is ready to be helped. At some of the Theosophical meetings in India one may see thought-forms which have been photographed and reproduced on a screen, and in these love, harmony, passion, have each some special colour. Where all this nonsense gets anyone it would be interesting to know. Suffice it to say that Theosophy, because it keeps the dead wood of Hinduism smouldering with its unproven and idiotic assertions, is delaying the education and betterment of a people it is trying to help.

The licensed indulgence of foul appetites under the cloak of religion should be stopped in India whatever the cost. Opium-eating Sadhus should be treated as they deserve, and every fool showing reverence to these blasphemous degenerates should be bound over. Any filthy ceremony, which loosens the primitive instincts in man, and shames the innate decency of jungle beasts, should be dealt with without mercy.

In this work I shall deal mostly with southern castes, for two reasons. Firstly, the south is the home of Hinduism ; and secondly, the north has been greatly influenced by Mohammedan thought. Belief in the Hindu gods has percolated into the north from the south, and in the north Hinduism has, to a certain extent, been adapted to suit Mohammedan ideas, which necessarily have been assimilated into the present expression of Hindu worship.

The woman's position behind the *purdah* (curtain) was brought into India during the Mohammedan invasion, when it was necessary to protect the women from the ruthless sons of Islam. The very nature of concealment placed women in an inferior position.

Much has been written about the child-wives of north India and the wretched condition of widows, and I do not deny that many of the statements are unfortunately only too true. But the northern women do not constitute all the women of India. In fact, I might say that they do not constitute the true Hindu woman. More than two-thirds of the writers who visit India stay but a short time, and see but a few surface facts. They see, indeed, what the Indian wishes them to see, or what he leaves about for them to observe. They damn the Indian for living by laws fixed in the dim past ; themselves emancipated by but a few centuries of civilization. Because the Indian differs from the man of the West, is no reason to condemn him.

## II

The Dravidians are mostly confined to the peninsula at the present time, but in the early days they were spread all over India. They had a very great influence on Hindu thought, and their worship has penetrated into the north, catching the imagination and response of Benares, the real hub of Hindu culture.

Anthropologists say that from their craniognomy the Dravidians are in some way related to the Australian aborigines, while certain ethnologists assert that they have some connection with the Caucasian stock, and consequently are affiliated with Europe. Certainly, the use of certain words and the boomerang might link them to the Australian aborigines in a common descent. The word Dravidian, which is derived

from Sanskrit, is identical with the word Tamil. The Dravidian race forms the bulk of the population of southern India, and is divided and sub-divided by its castes and languages.

In appearance the Dravidians run the gauntlet from Negroid to Aryan. They have both the broad flat nose of the negro and the highly-arched nose of the Aryan peoples. Sometimes they are very black ; sometimes they are quite fair. By fair, I mean they have the *café au lait* colouring which marks the fairer type of Indian. As in the north, their caste distinctions are governed by their trades, but they are more Brahman-ridden. They are given to strange ceremonies and sacrifices, and live in constant fear of the wrath of some demon. They practise magic, and dispense potions to win love, increase sex power, and bring misfortune to enemies. They worship Siva and Vishnu, and observe pollution very strictly. In this nonsense they are upheld by the Government.

Last year the Madras High Court refused the demand of the Untouchables to use certain roads near Guruvayur temple. The idea that a Brahman is polluted by the proximity of a member of an unclean caste is rigidly adhered to in the south, where are defined areas of pollution. In Malabar, for example, it is laid down that, while a Nair can pollute a man of higher caste only by touching him, masons, carpenters, blacksmiths and leather-workers pollute at a distance of twenty-four feet ; toddy-carriers at thirty-six feet ; cultivators of the soil at forty-eight feet ; and pariahs at sixty-four feet. These impure people are compelled to leave the road when they see a Brahman approaching, or to announce their approach as the lepers did in the Middle Ages.

So great is the number of the different Dravidian castes, I cannot mention them all in this book. I shall have, therefore, to make a fairly representative choice, and describe the habits and ceremonies of a few of them.

#### BADAGAS

The Badagas, an agricultural caste of *lingayats* (worshippers of the lingam), originated according to legend in the following manner. Two brothers, living in the Talamalai hills, to protect their sister from being ravished by a Moslem chief, escaped with her to the Nilgiri hills. There, the brothers

separated and went to different parts of the Nilgiris. One brother had two very beautiful daughters, and one day, while he was away from home, two Todas (another tribe of the Nilgiris) forcibly cohabited with his wife. To avenge himself upon the Todas, the brother asked the help of the Balayaru (still another tribe of the Nilgiris). The Balayaru agreed to assist him, but demanded as payment his two daughters for two men of their tribe. The two girls were given to the chosen men, and certain villages of the Nilgiris are peopled by their descendants.

Indian legends are full of stories of rape and willing cohabitation, and of the endurance of sex power. Even the gods and goddesses are not exempt from these human frailties. Sita, the wife of Rama, became a mother when she was ten thousand and thirty-three years old, while both Rama and Lakshmana complained bitterly of their elderly father's infatuation for the young Kaikeyi.

The Badagas' agricultural and family gods are enclosed by a stone wall near one of their villages. The gods are huge figures, very grotesque, in animal and human forms. They share their abode with the *lingam* and leaves of the belva tree, so dear to Siva. To try to photograph them would be more than one's life was worth, for their virtue departs with the photographs and they can no longer do their work. A Badaga who is slain by a tiger acquires a shrine and a yearly festival to his memory, and possibly some souvenir in the god's enclosure. The Badagas throw water over their animals for sacrifice, and accept only the animals who shiver when the water falls on them. Many other southern tribes, however, follow this same rite.

A little story is told to illustrate the brotherly love of these people. There is in one of their villages a high cliff overlooking a valley which they call the valley of the horse. The valley is so named because a man committed suicide by plunging down into it on his horse. The man took his life because his wife gave him first quality rice to eat, and to his brother she gave only second quality.

The tribe is divided into not less than ten castes. Some of them are flesh-eating, while others are strictly vegetarian. One caste is permitted to wear the Brahmanical thread.

There is a communal milk house into which women, and

men under pollution are not allowed to enter. The men, after a ceremonial bath, may do so, but the women are never permitted to handle milk. The cows attend to the call of nature in front of the houses, until the pile of manure almost bars the entrance. The manure is then taken away and put on the fields.

The wife of a Badaga does the agricultural labour, and her husband tries to market the produce. A woman's work is worth twelve annas a day, whereas that of a man is worth but three. If the woman has no fields of her own, she must till the soil and do the planting for others. She not only turns all her earnings into the family purse, but she leaves the best food for the male members of her family. The Badaga knows the value of his wife and will give her as a dowry as much as three hundred rupees. When the women are not cultivating, they wander all over their district collecting wood.

The Badaga goes through the ceremony of purification after he has been outcasted and taken back into the fold, by having his tongue burnt with a hot spike or stick. He is given a new thread during the ceremony, and members of his caste approach him one after the other and touch his head. He then falls at the feet of the priest, who anoints him with cow-dung and ashes.

As is the case with most castes in south India, there is always some head-man, or elder, who listens to disputes and tries to settle them. In the old days this dignitary had the choice of the women when he visited the household. To-day he is not so fortunate.

The Badagas live in constant terror of the village witch. He has the power to open locks and bolts by magic, and enter a house for any nefarious purpose. Such purpose is usually to ravish the women, who, owing to the subtle quality of his magic, do not know that they have been ravished. This caste employs the services of the necromancers when any member of the family is possessed by a devil, or suffering from the evil eye. If they get the idea that the witch is playing into the hands of the devil, and not trying to remove him, they fall upon the witch and try conclusions with him. Each Badaga family pays a yearly subscription to the witch, but that dignitary can often extort much more than his fee by threatening the family with a spell.

Boys are initiated into the milking ceremony when they are eight years old. A buffalo, followed by her calf, is taken to some appointed place, where certain relatives and invited members of the caste are to watch the ceremony. The boy is bathed and dressed in festival attire, and his father presents him with a pot almost filled with milk. The boy goes up to the buffalo, squirts a small quantity of her milk into the pot, and then, dipping in his hand, throws the contents in the faces of his father and mother. From that day he must attend to the milking, and is permitted at any time to enter the milking house. He must not, however, eat flesh, or speak to a menstruating woman, or anyone under pollution. He is fed before other members of his family. Once a year some of the milk must be thrown into the river, to ensure the fertility of the cattle.

When the Badaga boy is twelve years old he is initiated into the *lingayat* (given his *lingam*). On the appointed day the entire village must fast. One house is vacated and handed over to the officiating priest, who bestows the *lingam*. The priest does *puja* (worships the *lingam*). He then washes it in milk and in cow's urine, after which it is smeared with sandal and tumeric paste, and tied in pink cloth. The cloth is waved over burning incense and camphor. The boy recites a prayer after the priest, and the pink cloth holding Siva's emblem is tied about his neck. If a very elaborate ceremony is indulged in, all the milk of the village is thrown into the river, followed by flowers and leaves. The parents of the boy who has received the *lingam* must prepare a feast for as many Brahmans as they can feed.

Milk is very sacred to the Badagas. It is second only to cow's urine. In all India only the Tibetans one meets in, and around, Darjeeling speak with contempt of the cow and her products. They sneeringly refer to her milk as white urine.

Most of the Badaga villages have a hut for the exclusive use of women during monthly periods, a woman at that time being under pollution. A few months before a girl reaches puberty, she is sent to the hut a day or two before the new moon. This is done so that menstruation shall commence on an auspicious day. The girl stays one night in the hut, and the next day returns home, leaving her old clothes in the hut. She puts on a new *sari* which she has taken with her for the

occasion. Upon entering her home, she receives the blessings of her family and relatives. Badaga women are under pollution for six or seven days. If a woman discovers menstruation before it is due she must hurry to the hut, and her term of pollution is consequently extended. Her sanitary pads are made of shredded tree-bark and leaves, and she is permitted during her term of incarceration to bathe in cold water. She must spend the first night of her release outside her parents' house. The next day she cooks her own food, and eats it alone. If she accidentally touches anyone during menstruation, that person must observe the purification ceremony. I have known of girls using this period of seclusion to meet men. In one case it was a dissolute European, who prowls up and down Malabar seeking what he may devour. He is advised that such girls will meet him by servants in the rest-houses, who share with the girls their ill-gotten gains.

With the Badagas a form of courtship precedes marriage. No stigma is attached to a woman's name if she has several trials before she settles down with one man. Widows remarry, and it is quite common for a widow to marry her brother-in-law. Badaga custom requires the wife to be accessible to her husband's brother when her husband is absent. If the husband happens to be much younger than his wife, the wife cohabits with an older man until the husband is old enough to take on his family duty. The Badaga woman may change husbands whenever she wishes by a simple form of divorce. She may also become intimate with any man of her caste. Where a husband accuses another of enticing his wife away for immoral purposes, the father of the wife will be on his daughter's side of the case if no "bride-price" has been paid by the husband. Polygamy is permitted. Plurality of wives brings gain to the husband, as each one works to support herself and her children and to increase the family purse.

The marriage ceremony is very simple. The bride is taken to the house of her husband, and there is met by her mother-in-law who bears a pot of water. The mother-in-law pours the water into the girl's hands, taking care to let some of it fall on her feet. A string of beads is then put round the girl's neck, and the mother-in-law leads her into another room where she is given milk and rice to eat. She pretends to eat the mixture, after which her sister-in-law gives her water to

wash her hands. Then, with two women and a few musicians, she goes to a stream to bring water in newly-decorated pots for cooking purposes. When she returns to the house, she salutes her new relatives and the ceremony is concluded. Sometimes she sits with the bridegroom for some hours after the ceremony on a platform, to receive presents.

The funeral ceremony varies according to the division of the caste. In certain districts a man is burdened with the sins of the departed, and sometimes a buffalo becomes the scapegoat. If the buffalo is in milk, a little of the milk is put into the mouth of the corpse. Thereafter the buffalo must not be sold, having become sacred. This rule, however, is not always observed ; especially if a good price is offered for the animal.

A stretcher bearing the corpse is carried to the burning-ground. A woman heads the procession, waving a cloth all the way. The corpse is placed on the pyre, with its feet towards the south. The pyre is lighted by the eldest son ; or, if there is no son, by a male relative. Some of the female relatives tie pieces of their hair to the toes of the corpse. The day after the funeral the family goes to the burning-ground, taking two new pots. The bones are collected in these pots.

Later, the bones are taken out and put on leaves, and placed upon a tray. Each member of the caste salutes them, while the chief mourner holds the tray. The remains are then taken to the bone-pit and thrown in, and the pit is covered. This ceremony concluded, the caste repairs to a stream, where the barber shaves the heads of the male members of the family of the deceased. The shaving completed, they return to the house, and the chief mourner plucks a leaf from a tree with the prongs of a stick and buries it in the rubbish-heap.

The final death ceremony is celebrated some days later. The men go to the house of the deceased, and send all the women away. Then they go to a stream, bearing pots in which cow-dung has been placed. They fill the pots with water, and carry them back to the milk-house. The widow and other female relations are permitted to come to the door of the milk-house and weep. Sometimes the eldest son, upon leaving the milk-house, sprinkles the roof of the family hut with cow's urine.

The Udayas, a division of the Badaga, have a very different



death ceremony. They brand young bullocks on the thighs with the sign of the *lingam*. The bullocks are then made to stand on a cloth near the corpse, prayers are offered to them, and they are treated as if they were *lingams*. The marriage threads are next tied about their necks, and they are then told all about the dead person's sins. This caste deposits the dead, in a sitting position, in a grave where someone has been previously buried. Two men descend into the grave with the corpse, and place two lighted lamps beside it. At the *post mortem* celebration a stick of bamboo is placed on a cot to represent the deceased, and an umbrella is put over it to keep off the sun. Any offering of money or food thrown on the cot is placed to the god's credit. Sometimes this ceremony ends with a feast, but more often the people simply return to their houses.

#### BHUMIAS

In one sense the Bhumias might be said to resemble the Americans. It is customary for the Bhumia to compensate his divorced wife. He must give her whatever he can afford when he divorces her. I know of no case in the Indian caste system where alimony has been paid ; but a divorce settlement of likely proportions might well take the place of it. With the Bilimaggas of south Canara every unmarried male over twelve years of age must pay an annual bachelor tax of six annas to the temple fund.

#### PALIYANS

The Paliyans, an aboriginal caste of the Palni hills, can really be classed as savages. They live in caves, and in leaf-made huts in or near the jungle. Yet, though surrounded by all the beasts of the jungle, they seem to have no idea of hunting. Sometimes they perch in trees to await the passing of a jungle fowl, which they kill with stones. They never make a raid on crops, a feat they could easily accomplish ; but subsist on roots, bark, and wild honey. Indeed, they seem to lack the intelligence or the ambition to feed themselves properly. Frequently their costume is eked out with leaves and straw. They can shoot with an arrow, but they are too

lazy or indifferent to use this primitive method of obtaining food. Shakari men (hunters) occasionally employ the men of this caste as trackers. They will stalk game for a piece of tobacco or an old rag to cover their nudity.

They do not pollute other castes because they do not eat beef, but they keep out of the way of others as they have no inclination to leave their own haunts. In fact, they consider it unlucky to wander more than seven miles from their village. In this respect they are comparable to a tribe of aborigines who inhabit the Tebetan hills near Assam. Incidentally, I was once fortunate enough to witness the tonsorial art of that same Tebetan tribe. The man who was to receive the beauty treatment squatted on the ground, while the barber placed a log of wood under his lank tresses and chopped them off with an axe. As a finishing touch, he put an earthen pot on the client's head, and with a knife and a flat piece of wood to support the hair, he proceeded to trim the locks beneath the edge of the pot in a circular line. The result was quite a good imitation of the bob.

The marriage ceremony of the Paliyans is very simple. The relatives of the bride and bridegroom are invited to the hut of the bride, where they sit on the ground and chew roots and betel-nuts. The father of the bride then announces that his daughter is to go to the house of the bridegroom. A wedding simply means that the man will find the food, and the woman will cook it.

If any member of the Paliyan caste becomes ill, he is deserted by the rest of the caste. They move away from his hut taking their belongings, consisting of a few pots and rags. If the sick man recovers, he joins the others when he has discovered their whereabouts. If he dies, they return (one member of the caste having been watching his progress from a distance) and bury him. This caste does not burn the dead. To interfere with anyone who is ill would be to offend the demon who brought the malady upon him.

The only knowledge these backward people possess is that of antidotes for the poisonous bites of beasts and snakes. In the production of these remedies they have uncanny skill. They concoct a purgative from herbs and roots, which is far too effective for the uninitiated.

Forest demons are the only deities the Paliyans fear. They

have no place of worship. They keep a fire burning all night to protect them from wild beasts, and sometimes this fire is the only means of discovering their whereabouts. The fire is made by igniting the floss of the cotton tree with flint.

If they happen to kill a jungle animal, its blood is offered to some forest demon to appease its wrath. The flesh of such a kill must be evenly divided in the settlement. The skin is either given to the chief, or exchanged for tobacco and rice. They catch fish by bruising the leaves of a creeper and throwing them on the water. Some property of the leaves entices the fish to the surface, where they are caught with crudely-wrought nets. If the Paliyans find the dead body of a cow or a buffalo near a stream, the stream is thereafter abandoned.

When a widow refuses to remarry, the male members of the caste keep her supplied with roots and betel-nut.

During confinement, the woman sits on the edge of a rock, with her legs depending but not touching the ground. When the child is born, she cuts the navel-string with a knife or sharp stone, and allows the infant to slide down the side of the rock to the ground. The babe is washed in a stream, and placed on warm ashes if he has no clothes. If any rag can be found to cover him, it is supposed to furnish sufficient warmth.

The Paliyans work for higher castes, who browbeat them and give them a handful of rice for a full day's ploughing or planting.

As in all castes, a few of the members emerge from the degradation and ignorance of their forbears. There are certain Paliyans who gravitate to Coimbatore and other southern towns, and become gardeners, blacksmiths, office peons, and coolies. Sometimes a Paliyan family will be attached to a landowner, who, with the help of the money-lender, keeps the family in such a state of debt that it is for ever impossible to seek another master. When members of the caste move into towns, they become worshippers of Siva, observing purification with cow's urine for sins which they have taken on with their worship. Menstrual pollution, and a marriage ceremony with lamp and presents and feasting, are then observed.

The Paliyans are of unbelievable ugliness. The men are short and black, with wiry hair and dull eyes, and their bodies are not well proportioned. The women have thick lips, dis-

gusting teeth, flat noses, and pendulant ears. Like Siva's *lingam*, their hair is anointed with melted butter, which furnishes rich pasture for the ever-present lice. Their bodies are better than the bodies of the men, but that is saying very little.

Before they move into the towns, the Paliyans leave the upper part of their bodies exposed. A few years ago a missionary, who tried to Christianize them, objected to this, and not wishing to displease their teacher, they drew their covering cloth upward. Needless to say, the missionary decided that it is sometimes better to leave well enough alone !

### KONDHS

The bloodthirsty earth goddesses, Pari Pennu and Bera Pennu, are not happy to-day because the Government has forbidden the Kondhs to worship them with human sacrifices. Very reluctantly they accept the blood of buffalos, goats, and sheep. Round about the year 1860, however, the altars of these goddesses were drenched with human blood, and three human beings were sacrificed at a time upon them. One offering was to the sun, one to the east and the other to the west end of the village.

In the *meriah* rite a wooden post about six feet long, with a cross-bar near the top, was sunk into the ground, and to it the sacrificial victim was tied by his long hair. A narrow grave was dug under the post, and four men held the arms and legs of the human offering, who was suspended horizontally over the grave. The officiating priest repeated a long invocation, while with his knife he hacked pieces out of his victim's back. There is one of these *meriah* posts, very much eaten up by white ants, in the Madras museum.

The goddess was implored to eat the offering, and in return to give the Kondhs swords, guns, gunpowder, and victory over other castes. There was always a special prayer for the preservation of the caste from the tyranny of kings and governments. The priest addressed the victim after the poor unfortunate was almost cut to pieces, and consoled him something after the following manner : " Do not be grieved, the goddess will eat you at once. We purchased you from your parents, who knew we intended to sacrifice you, and therefore

there is no sin on our heads, but on the heads of your parents." After the priest had finished speaking, he decapitated the victim. The body slipped into the grave, and the head was left on the post until the wild beasts devoured it. The knife was then stuck into the post, until required for the two sacrifices that followed.

When their frenzy reached a certain pitch, the watching Kondhs did not wait for the priest to carry out the rite. They surrounded the victim, and beat him violently on the head with brass bangles made for the occasion. If this inhuman treatment did not kill the wretched man, they finished him off by strangulation with a piece of slit bamboo. The priest, with that, hacked the body to pieces and distributed the fragments, and the Kondhs dashed with their precious treasure to the stream which irrigated their fields, and suspended the piece of flesh on a pole over the water. The mangled remains of the corpse were finally buried, and funeral obsequies were performed.

The *meriah* agents say (see manual of Vizagapatam district) that there was reason to believe that the Raja of Jeypore, when he was installed on the death of his father, sacrificed a girl of thirteen at the shrine of the goddess Durga in the town of Jeypore. While, officially, goats and buffaloes are now sacrificed by the Kondhs, the belief in the superior efficacy of the human sacrifice dies hard. During the Rampa rebellion of 1880 several cases of human sacrifice were discovered, while the same year two persons were convicted of attempting the *meriah* rite near Ambadala in Bissamkatak. In 1883 a man was found murdered in one of the temples of Jeypore, in circumstances pointing to the *meriah*. In 1886 a formal inquiry showed ample grounds for the belief that victims were being kidnapped for sacrifices in Bastar, and as recently as 1902 a petition was presented to the District Magistrate of Ganjam, asking him to sanction a human sacrifice.

Female infanticide was so common in Jeypore country as to be farmed out as a paying business. The Raja is said to have made money out of it in one of the caste's larger divisions. The custom was to consult the priest concerning the fate of the child before it was born. If the priest decided it was to be killed, the parents had to pay the headman of the

division a fee for the privilege of killing it, and the headman paid the Raja three hundred rupees a year for renting the privilege to murder.

From Macpherson's manuscripts we learn that the portion of the Kondh country where female infanticide was known to prevail, was estimated at 2000 square miles. The population numbered about 64,000 and, approximately, 1200 to 1500 infants were destroyed annually.

Infanticide has existed among the Kondhs from time immemorial. Their belief is that the sun god created everything good, and the earth goddess introduced evil into the world. These two powers are supposed to be always in conflict. Certain divisions of the caste worship the sun god, and make no sacrifices, but by far the greater number hold that the earth goddess must be propitiated with blood. The divisions which practised infanticide believed that the sun god deplored the birth of females, because the feminine creation had caused all the trouble in the world. Men were charged to rear as few females as possible, and only to refrain from murdering them from the sheer necessity of keeping the race going. The Kondhs believe that souls return over and over again in the same families, and if they are not welcome in female form, they will acquire sense enough to return as males. In many houses, even now, one finds no female children. The divisions, however, addicted to infanticide did not practise adult sacrifice. One division, indeed, is said never to have performed it; the reason being that during the first attempt the knife was crooked and dull, and the sacrificers made such a bad business of it that it was abandoned.

Twenty-five descendants of persons reserved for sacrifice at a former *meriah* rite, but who were rescued by Government officers, returned themselves as *meriah* at the census of 1901.

The Maliahs of Goomsur (Kondhs) sacrificed annually to Thada Pennoo, their earth goddess. Several settlements contributed to the purchase of a victim, no criminal or prisoner being acceptable to the goddess. Unless the victim was paid for, the goddess would ignore the sacrifice, and grown men were the most esteemed, because they were more expensive. When children were purchased, they were reared by the family who purchased them until they were old enough to be sacrificed. They were kindly treated, and kept under no restraint

when young. When they were older, and could appreciate the fate that awaited them, they were watched and guarded. Grown victims were often captured by the traders in human flesh, and sold to some family wishing to offer a sacrifice. The price was paid in money, cattle, or corn.

For a month before the sacrifice the celebrants feasted and danced round the *meriah* in an intoxicated condition. On the opening day of the gruesome rite the victim was stupefied with toddy or opium, and made to sit leaning against the post. The assembled multitude then danced round him chanting: "Oh, Thada Pennoo, we offer you this sacrifice. Give us good crops and health." Afterwards the unhappy victim was dragged home.

The second day, having been intoxicated, the victim was anointed with oil, and each individual present touched the anointed part and wiped the oil on his own body. The crowd then formed a procession and walked round the village, carrying the victim, together with the post which had been dug up from the earth. To the top of the post was attached a tuft of peacock feathers. When the procession returned to the *meriah* ground, the priest cut a piece of flesh from the victim and buried it under the village idol. He then presented each of the villagers with a piece of flesh. Taking the bloody prize, they ran with all haste to their land, to bury it before sunset. The priests and his assistants thereupon killed a pig and, after allowing the blood to first flow into the grave, they buried the victim.

On the morrow a buffalo calf was brought to the post. Its fore feet were cut off, and it was tied to the post until the following day. On this, the last day, drunken women, dressed in male attire and armed with sticks, danced and sang round the dying calf.

Mr. Arbuthnot, collector of Vizagapatam, not so long ago reported the following facts :

"Of the hill tribe Codooloo there are said to be two distinct classes, the Cotia Codooloo and the Jethapoo Codooloo. The former class is that which is in the habit of offering human sacrifices to the god called Jenkery, with a view to secure good crops.

"This ceremony is generally performed on the Sunday pre-

ceding or following the Pongal<sup>1</sup> feast. The victim is seldom carried by force, but procured by purchase, and there is a fixed price for each person, which consists of forty articles such as a bullock, a male buffalo, a cow, a goat, a piece of cloth, a silk cloth, a brass pot, a large plate, a bunch of plantains, etc.

"The man who is destined for sacrifice is carried before the god, and a small quantity of rice coloured with saffron (tumeric) is put upon his head. The influence of this is said to prevent his attempting to escape, even though set at liberty. It would appear, however, that from the moment of his seizure till he is sacrificed, he is kept in a continued state of stupefaction or intoxication.

"He is allowed to wander about the village, to eat and drink anything he may take a fancy to, and even to have connection with any of the women whom he may meet.

"On the morning set apart for the sacrifice, he is carried before the idol in a state of intoxication. One of the villagers acts as priest, who cuts a small hole in the stomach of the victim, and with the blood that flows from the wound the idol is smeared. Then the crowds from the neighbouring villages rush forward, and he is literally cut into pieces.

"Each person who is so fortunate as to procure it carries away a morsel of the flesh and presents it to the idol of his own village."

In spite of the supposed discontinuance of human sacrifice in India, a case comes to light once in a while. The performance which I describe in the chapter on blood sacrifice was without doubt an offering to the earth goddess. It is my opinion that there are many sacrifices which are not discovered. A member of a hill caste in south India told one of my friends that crops had never been the same since animal sacrifices had to be substituted for human.

Colonel Campbell, during his service among the hill tribes of Kondhistan, ordered his men to destroy the effigies of elephants on which human offerings had been made. The Colonel, in some of his writings, described the method of the sacrifice. Human beings were tied to the proboscis of the elephant effigies and whirled round until, at a given signal from the priest, the crowd rushed in. The crowd seized the victim, and with their knives chopped off every bit of flesh

<sup>1</sup> Rice feast. *Pongal* is the Tamil word for rice.



from the shrieking wretch, whose remains were then cut down, and as the Colonel expresses it, "the horrid orgies were over."

When a buffalo is sacrificed, the maddened Kondhs dance round it as long as they can stand on their feet. A great deal of toddy is drunk, to spur them on if they seem to lag in the dance. After they have worked themselves into a state of suitable frenzy, they fall on the stupefied beast and smother it with caresses. They then sing a dirge over it, in which they entreat it not to blame them for what they are about to do. After this the buffalo is taken into the jungle to a so-called sacred grove, where it is tied to a stake. The men throw any extra clothing they may be wearing to the women, and the furious dance round the animal recommences. At the end of another seemingly endless dance, the man who officiates as priest hits the buffalo on the head with an axe, and, surrounding the beast, the men hack at it with knives. As soon as a man secures a piece of flesh, he rushes away to bury the gory mass in his fields.

The Kondhs, judged by their type, are Dravidians. They are found in Orrisa, Ganjam, Bengal, and the Central Provinces. They call themselves differently, according to their district. In the Telugu country they are named Kotuvandlu; in and near Vizagapatam Konda Dora, or Konda Kappu. The word Kondh, deriving from Telugu, denotes a hill or mountain. The Kondhs' character varies according to their location; those of the plains are said to compare unfavourably with the mountain people. But they are all tenacious of their rights, and like to be known as landowners.

In some places the Kondhs build houses with mud walls; in other sections they live in any kind of a hut. They are bold and courageous, and very sincere in their superstitions. They cultivate grains and vegetables, and breed animals. Their most valuable crop is tumeric (saffron), which requires two years to mature. This crop is responsible for many of the blood sacrifices; it being believed that blood gives tumeric its colour, and causes it to flourish.

Many of the Kondhs were employed as tea-garden coolies, but the slump in the tea industry has driven the majority of them back to the hills, where they live on game in some cases and on jungle produce. A few years ago the Kondhs of the Ganjam district would not do ordinary labour, such as coolie

work. But, since, the economic pinch has forced them into anything which will enable them to live.

Once, both men and women among the Kondhs paid much attention to their hair, decorating it with flowers and huge pins made of deer-horn. Their one-time gay colours for some reason, possibly economic, have disappeared. The men now wear a narrow *dhotie* round their loins, and the women appear to drape themselves with anything they can find. Young girls wear pieces of broom in their ears until they are married, but once married they adorn themselves with as many car-rings as their husbands can afford. A gold or silver nose-ring is usually worn, and bracelets, when they are not in pawn. Both sexes are addicted to drink, especially when the sago palm is in sap. Feasts and sacrifices are the excuses for drinking to excess.

Women of the Kondhs after marriage are quite straight, but there is a lot of immorality among the girls. Treks into the jungle for fruits and berries, and fishing parties during the hot weather, are occasions for frequent *liaisons*. The parents arrange the marriages. A bride must be paid for in *gontis*. A *gonti* is one of anything; for example, one pig, one goat, one brass pot. The *gontis* may be all the same; as for instance, ten bullocks, ten pigs, or twenty chickens.

A Kondh must not marry a woman of his own village. Sometimes the bride is wrapped in a red blanket, and carried to the bridegroom's house by her uncle. More often, she walks accompanied by the young women of her own village. Usually the bridegroom's party meets the bride's party at the village boundary. To put a little variety into the occasion, the bride's party sometimes attacks the bridegroom's party with sticks and stones and clods of earth. When this is done, a running fight is kept up until the bridegroom's house is reached. If the women can throw straight, sometimes the men are quite seriously injured.

On the day after the bride's arrival something is slaughtered, either a goat or a pig, or even a buffalo, and there is a feast at which everybody becomes intoxicated. When the bride's attendants return home, they usually take some present from the bridegroom to the bride's family. Frequently the present is a pair of bullocks. On the third and fourth days there is another grand feast, when the bridegroom's brother performs

what little there is of a marriage ceremony. He tells the girl that if she behaves herself her children will be as strong as tigers, but if she goes astray the children will be no better than monkeys and snakes. The assembled guests then wish the couple long life and plenty of male children.

It was once the custom among the Kondhs of Gumsar to put brass handcuffs, weighing from twenty to thirty pounds, on the bride. The unhappy girl had to sit with her wrists resting on her shoulders, to support the weight, and in that position she remained for three days. The object was to prevent her from running back to her father and mother, and no doubt the idea originated in marriage by capture, which was customary in this caste in the early days.

Kondh boys and girls who care for each other, are apt to carry on a secret affair until the boy gets together the necessary gifts to offer the girl's parents for the girl. I know of one case where the child born to the couple finally made the wedding arrangements.

At the birth ceremony the midwife in attendance shampoos the abdomen of the woman in confinement with castor oil. When the umbilical cord is sloughed off, a spider is burnt to ashes over a candle flame, and the ashes are mixed in a coconut-shell with castor oil and applied with a feather to the infant's navel. The child's body is smeared with castor oil and saffron powder until it is a month old.

The naming ceremony occurs six months after birth. One of the elders of the caste ties a cord from the haft to the point of a sickle, and figures are brought out to represent the household images and the child's ancestors. As the names of the ancestors and the images are mentioned, rice is put on the cord, and the name at which the sickle moves when the rice is applied is chosen. Food is served to all present, and the man who has performed the sickle-ceremony receives a fee.

The Kondhs' funeral ceremonies differ from those of any other caste. The body is burnt, and the following day a dish of cooked rice is placed on the spot where the cremation took place. An incantation is pronounced, and the spirit of the dead is requested to eat the rice and enjoy itself. The spirit is especially invoked not to enter the body of a devil or tiger, as in either of those forms it could return and annoy the people of the village. Three days after death a straw effigy

of the deceased is made, and set up on the roof of the house where the deceased had lived. The friends and relations then assemble and lament before the effigy. Each person brings a present, but on his departure he must receive a present of greater value. A death also requires a purification ceremony, and this takes the form of a sacrifice. A buffalo is killed on the seventh day after death, but if the man was killed while hunting a pig is sacrificed. The head of the pig is cut off, and passed between the legs of the men who have assembled for the occasion. If the head touches anybody's legs, it is a very bad omen. A gun is shot off, or some kind of loud noise is made to drive away the ghost.

One division of the caste tie a sheep to the feet of the corpse. Two men carry the corpse to the burning-ground, and the sheep trots along with them. Friends follow, carrying the deceased's clothes, brass eating dish, drinking cup, and any ornaments he may have possessed. Having burnt the body, they leave these things, together with the sheep, on the spot and return home. They procure as much toddy as they can, and everybody gets intoxicated.

If the family of the deceased can afford it, dancers come and dance to the weird music of the drums. On the twelfth day after the funeral, more liquor is obtained and there is another orgy. The dance of death is much the same as the dance round the *meriah* post. If they can afford to slay a buffalo, young men and old gyrate round the animal which lies weltering in its gore. Once in a while men detach themselves from the gyrating circle, step up to the carcase, and dip their sticks in its blood. With the blood on their sticks, they dance furiously, like demons gone mad. When dancers drop out, others take their place, and the dance goes on for hours.

The women take no part in the death dance, but they have their own dances which they execute with considerable grace. They perform a peacock dance which is nothing like the peacock dance of Bengal. They drag a long scarf from their waists, to represent the tail of the peacock. They stretch their necks to simulate the neck of the bird, and utter piercing shrieks as they move about waving their arms like wings. There are several very pretty movements in the dance, not unlike some of the steps of the minuet. Fortunately the

shrieking is not continuous, and one's attention thereby distracted from the beauty of the dance.

The Kondhs live in dread of witchcraft, and are for ever watching for signs of it. In this connection the Madras Police Report records a case in the Vizagapatam hill districts. The younger of three brothers died of fever, and when the body was cremated the upper portion did not burn. The surviving brothers therefore concluded that death had been caused by the witchcraft of a certain Kondh, and they attacked the man and killed him. After cutting their victim's body into halves, they took the upper part to their village and threw it on the spot where the deceased brother's body had refused to burn. For their crime they were arrested and sentenced to death.

When cholera breaks out in a village, men and women smear their bodies with pig's fat which has been liquefied, and they continue to do this until the disappearance of the epidemic. It is believed that the cholera goddess is driven away by the smell of the fat. They also attempt to prevent the approach of the goddess by barricading the paths to the village with ditches, which they fill with thorns and pots of stinking oil.

The Kondhs have a friendship oath, which in some way resembles the blood covenant of the Hebrews. Friendship is sworn on sacred rice, which has been consecrated to the god Jaggannath of Puri. Pilgrims visiting Puri get a quantity of this rice, and distribute it to those who ask for it. It is supposed that one cannot utter a lie, or have an evil thought, while holding the rice in the hand. Instances are known of friendship, sworn on the rice, being contracted between townsmen and the poor village peasants ; even between a Brahman woman and a Sudra servant. Bound by such friendship, two people allow no festival to pass without an exchange of presents, and no ceremony goes on at the house of one unless the other is invited. If one party dies, the survivor does not consider the bond disconnected, but continues to make gifts to the family of the deceased. This friendship is called *son-gatho*, and it increases with the barbarity of the division. Among the wilder tribes there are splendid examples of *son-gatho*, which have lasted for generations. One hill tribe takes an oath on a leopard's skin, or while holding a peacock-feather in the hand.

The legend of the origin of the Kondhs is a story of human sacrifice.

In the beginning, when the ground was all wet, there were only two women living on the earth, and in due course each was blessed with a son. The two women and their children came from the interior of the earth, bringing with them two plants which were their food. One day, when one of the women was cutting one of the plants, she accidentally cut her finger and the blood dropped on the ground, and instantly the wet earth became dry. The woman cooked the plant and gave it to her son to eat, who asked her why it tasted so much sweeter than usual. She told him that she did not know, but that that night she expected to have a dream and would let him know. The next morning the woman made her son promise to do as she told him if he would prosper in the world. He must forget that she was his mother, and cut the flesh from her back and bury it in the ground. This her son did, whereupon the wet soil dried up and became hard, and the animals, trees, and birds came into existence. A partridge then scratched the ground, and millet and rice grew.

The two brothers agreed that, as the sacrifice of the woman brought forth abundance from the ground, they must sacrifice a human being once a year. A god by the name of Boora Panoo, together with his daughters, came to live with the brothers, and, marrying the daughters, the brothers begat children. When the children grew up, there was a dispute as to which one should be sacrificed, and, not being able to decide the point, the brothers sacrificed a monkey instead. The goddess of the earth in consequence was very angry, and ordered the proper offering of a human being. The two men sought for ten years for a victim, and finally they found a man with a son five years old. They bought the son from the father, with permission to sacrifice him.

The boy was fettered to prevent his running away, toddy was made from grain, and a post was erected at which a pig was sacrificed. Two days before being offered the boy was tied to the post. On the night before the sacrifice the priest took a stick and poked it into the earth until the earth goddess answered, and round the hole from whence the goddess had spoken, pieces of wood were arranged lengthways and cross-

ways, and an egg was placed on the structure. On the sacrificial day the boy was conducted to the wood, and made to lie on it face downward. Pieces of flesh were then removed from his back, and buried at the caste's place of worship, while other portions were put into the ground near a drinking-well, to increase the water. The remainder of the corpse was burnt on the pile of wood. On the next day a buffalo was sacrificed, and a feast given.

The following verse (which was intended to be uttered over the human sacrifice) is now recited by the *Janni* (priest) at the buffalo sacrifice. "Come, male slave, come, female slave, what do you say? What do you call out for? You have been brought, ensnared by the Haddi. You have been called, ensnared by the Domba. What can I do, even if you are my child? You are sold for a pot of food."

### TODAS

The Todas, an aboriginal tribe of the Nilgiri hills, seem to interest foreigners more than any of the other tribes. The interest may be explained by the fact that many attempts have been made to connect the Todas with tribes that have been lost. Despite the hypotheses of many writers that the Todas are derived from one, or several, of the races of the Malabar, their origin is buried with the secrets of the past.

Certain Todas of the older generation might easily belong to some rather magnificent lost people, being above the average height, well-proportioned, with regular features and fine teeth. Their hirsute development distinguishes them from the other hill tribes. The hair on their heads is usually curly and abundant, their beard is luxuriant, and a dense growth of hair covers their chest and abdomen. Hair is, also, thick on the upper and under surfaces of their arms, on the shoulder-blades, the thighs, the knees, and the entire surface of the legs. Their eyebrows unite across the forehead, and thick tufts of hair grow in and round the ears. All the men have scars on the right shoulders, which are produced by burning the skin with hot sticks (sacred fire-sticks). It is believed that these scars enable them to milk their buffalos.

The men of the present generation, however, are stunted and decrepit, the result of syphilis contracted outside their

tribe. They consider it beneath their dignity to cultivate land, and when some years ago they were granted a number of acres, they turned it over to the Badagas and continued to herd their cattle. When they find it necessary to seek employment on the estates of tea and coffee planters, they never take the slightest interest in their work.

The tribe maintains herds of semi-domesticated buffalos, on whose milk and products they largely depend. Since the establishment of bazaars at Ootacamund and Canoor, the tribe's income has been augmented by the sale of milk and curds. Wealth with them is judged by the number of buffalos a man possesses, and a story is told by the hill people, that when the King visited India, the Todas wanted to know how many buffalos he possessed.

The Toda women have no idea of sexual morality. The Christian missions convert them when possible, but conversion seems to make no difference in their character. Toda women are extremely ugly and degenerate, even in early middle-life, into slovenly hags. The odour of their person, caused by the rancid butter with which they anoint themselves, keeps one at a distance. They are often tattooed with circles and dots, seldom with more ambitious designs. The circles and dots are marked on the skin with lamp-black, and pricked out with a porcupine quill. Ornaments made of shells and beads are worn, and the lobes of their ears are pierced and brass earrings inserted. They wear a cloth draped round their bodies; Christian converts being distinguished by a white *sari*, and a white cloth over their heads. Greater numbers of Todas have been converted to Sivaism than to Christianity, however. Many Todas worship now in the Siva temples, observing the Siva rites even to marrying their girls before puberty. Toda women are all extremely lazy, and sometimes spend most of the day buttering and curling their hair. Since the opening of the bazaars, they have done a little embroidery, which they try to sell. But it is very crude, and not greatly in demand.

It is said that the female Todas have been debauched by Europeans, who have introduced the diseases from which they suffer. This, however, is a statement difficult to believe, considering their unprepossessing appearance and filthy habits.

There is no way of knowing how the diseases that have ravaged the Todas were introduced; but the fact remains



that these people, once lusty of physique and temperate of habit, are suffering from some form of syphilis, and have gone over to lax and filthy practices. They deny the use of aphrodisiacs, but both men and women mix dogs' testicles into a paste with milk, and eat the concoction to "give them strength." Their food consists of rice boiled in milk, wild vegetables, wild raspberries, tree parasites, and ground orchids. Like the Chinese, they eat the tender shoots of the bamboo in the form of a curry. They are very fond of a soup which they make of the roots and flowers of thistles.

The Todas use matches freely, except in their dairies. No one is permitted to light a match in the dairy. It was some time before these people would consent to use matches, as they have many superstitions about fire. They use different woods for different purposes: certain woods to warm themselves by, other woods for cooking, and still others for sacred objects.

Each of their villages is composed of huts, a dairy, a cattle-pen and a temple. The huts are covered with pent-roofing, which slopes down to the ground so that a tall person must stoop to enter them. One room is sufficient for the family, whether the household consists of two or twenty. A platform built on one side of the room is strewn with buffalo and deer skins, and is used as a sleeping-place. On the opposite side, are the fire and cooking pots. No man or woman need be sensitive at undressing in full view of any others upon the platform, since the entire family tumbles into bed with clothes on and arises in the morning all ready for the day. The women may do a little hair-buttering when the men go out, but washing, unless one is going to be married, is not to be thought of.

The dairies are divided into two compartments: one contains the butter, milk and curds, and the other is the dwelling-place of the *palol* (dairy priest). Two paths lead to the dairy from the huts, for the use of men and women respectively. Women are permitted to go as far as the dairy-door, to receive butter-milk. The dairy priest is not permitted to visit any of the huts while he holds office, and in some cases he is not supposed to visit his home or to go to another village. If it is necessary for the priest to cross water, he must not pass by a bridge but must use a ford. He should

be celibate, but if he has a wife he may turn her over to his brother during his official term.

Todas will not use river water, for fear of arousing the wrath of the river goddess. A pregnant woman, like the dairy priest, must not cross water, and she is not even permitted to ford a stream. Any Toda, after wading through water, apologizes to the water goddess for disturbing her. The Paikara is their sacred river, and there is a legend to account for its origin. An uncle and nephew went out, so the story goes, to gather wild honey. The uncle was unsuccessful in his search, but the nephew gathered two portions. He secreted them in a crevice among the rocks, and told his uncle that he had found nothing. The following day he went to the spot where the honey was hidden, and he found that it had leaked down over the rocks and had transformed itself into the Paikara river.

The Todas' social organization is divided into two classes, which cannot intermarry. If polyandry means that a woman is accessible to her husband's brothers and relatives, then the Todas practise it. One usually thinks of polyandry, however, as a system in which women have some choice in the selection of husbands, but the Toda woman simply acquires them with her marriage ceremony. I have heard, none the less, people refer to the Toda marriage-system as polyandrous. A few years ago the Todas, in a petition to Government, asked permission to legalize their marriages. The Government decided that such legalization was not necessary, and that any Toda who wished could register his marriage. A Registrar was appointed, but with the exception of the marriages of a few Christian converts, he was not called upon to discharge his duty.

When a girl reaches puberty she goes through an initiation ceremony with a man. There is a ceremony performed during the seventh month of pregnancy, to decide who is the father of the child. The man who undertakes the honour presents the expectant mother with a bow and arrow. If the husbands are all brothers, the eldest presents the gifts, but the other brothers are also regarded as fathers. If the husbands are not brothers, the ceremony becomes a social occasion, and after much discussion one of the husbands decides to become the father. He becomes not only the father of the coming child, but of all succeeding children. And the woman still

considers him the father of her children, even if he has been dead for several years.

Until very recently the Todas practised female infanticide ; which custom still exists to some extent, though strenuously denied. An old woman used to take the female child when it was born, and close its nostrils, mouth and ears with cloth. Shortly after, its head would droop and it would die of suffocation. The old woman received four annas (four pence) for the deed.

Several funeral ceremonies are arranged for a deceased Toda. The first occurs when the body is burnt ; the second may be a month or two months later ; while subsequent services may be held at any time agreed upon by the relatives and friends of the deceased.

To the second and later ceremonies visitors are invited. Everyone goes to the spot where the body was burnt, and the women, usually relatives of the deceased, work themselves up to the necessary pitch of lamentation. They commence with moaning, but finally reach a stage of what appears to be genuine grief and actually cry. In spite of this lachrymose exhibition, they will turn and beg if any foreigner approaches, and after acknowledging the coin, will return to the mourning. Sometimes the bones are taken out of the ground, where they have been buried after the cremation. The skull is placed on a cloth, and everyone makes obeisance to it. It is then anointed with *ghi*.

A buffalo is usually sacrificed to conclude a funeral ceremony at which Todas from all the surrounding villages (or *mands*, as they call their settlements) have assisted. Boys are sent out to search for the required animal, which is frequently half-dead and bleeding from the nose when they finally drive it to the place chosen for the sacrifice. Sometimes a bell is tied on its neck, and its horns are smeared with butter, before it is finally despatched by a blow, or a series of blows, from a club. When the buffalo is sacrificed before the cremation, the deceased may be placed upon the animal, his face resting on the rump and his feet on the head. If this is done, the manifestations of grief become frantic, and the uproar can be heard for miles. Sometimes the hair is cut from the head of a corpse, to be wrapped round the skull after cremation before the bones are interred.

The Toda children are fond of games, and will burlesque any sacred rite when they feel inclined. They will mimic the marriage and funeral rites, and sometimes even the puberty ceremony. The men are fond of sport, especially if they can exhibit their strength, and running, wrestling, lifting heavy weights are favourite diversions. Bets are made when weights are lifted, and arguments may be started, which end in blows.

It has been my experience that Indians cannot bear to lose in a game, and lack entirely the real quality of the sportsman, that of being a good loser. Quite recently an Indian tried to bribe the King's Royal Rifles to acknowledge defeat by the Calcutta Customs in a game of football. The lance-corporal and the goal-keeper were approached by the Indian, who offered them one hundred rupees each if the Royal Rifles lost the game. They were to receive a small sum in advance, and the rest when the game had been lost. The two men made an appointment with the Indian to receive the first instalment, and in the meantime informed their trainer of the affair. The police were on hand to witness the handing over of the money, and an arrest was made. Later, the man was released on bail. The Indian has no sporting traditions to uphold, and no doubt the enormity of the bribe in this case simply did not occur to the offender.

Many of the Indian games seem to burlesque their ceremonies, or to reduce the habits of their daily lives to buffoonery. I have seen a performing bull and a diminutive cow taken round by a mendicant, to enact a scene in which a husband is displeased with his wife. The bull husband refuses to have anything to do with his cow wife, and trots off in high dudgeon. The trainer then attempts to make peace between them, and is rewarded by the husband's furious charge. The trainer is knocked down, but no harm is done because the animal's horns are padded. The man rises, shakes himself, and complains of the treatment he has received. It is only after many promises to buy an endless quantity of cakes in the bazaar that the husband condescends to return to his wife.

The Kathakali, the national drama of Malabar, is held in great esteem by the Nambutiri Brahmans. It is more than three centuries old, and is believed to have been brought into existence by a member of the ancient ruling

house. The drama has several themes, representing the exploits of the Ramayana. *Kiritas* (hunting tribes), wearing an ancient make-up, chase players dressed to represent monkeys and birds. The performance is all dumb show, and when the pantomime is finished, songs are sung. Everyone is thoroughly conversant with the songs, and becomes severely critical at the slightest failure or sign of fatigue. A single theme may last for eight or nine hours.

A game called the seventh amusement, in which the players, although formerly all Brahmans, may be of mixed castes, is played by sitting round a lamp and reciting poems in praise of Siva. It is really a competition in quick-wittedness and memory. Two persons engage in the recital, and a third proclaims the mistakes. A judge orders the man who has made the greater number of mistakes to pay a forfeit, and the forfeits, which are usually very funny, save the game from utter dullness.

## CHAPTER VI

### CASTES. (HUNTERS)

#### VALMIKUDU

**T**HE Valmikudu caste has a most interesting origin.

Years ago there was a Brahman who lived by murdering and plundering all travellers who came his way. One day, while engaged in his usual avocation, he met seven Rishis who were seven planets disguised as holy men. The Brahman robber ordered them to deliver to him their property, and in doing so the Rishis told their despoiler that he would suffer thousands of years, in many lives, for his wicked deeds. The Brahman explained that he was a family man, with a family for ever demanding the latest styles in leafy adornment, bangles, anklets, nose rings, and the like. Moreover, the Brahman added, his sons had to be reared in a fashion befitting the wearers of the sacred thread. For a moment the planets considered the burdens with which Karma (the debts of a previous life) had loaded the Brahman. Then they told the culprit to go home and ask his wife and children if they would share his future punishments. When consulted, the Brahman's heartless wife and children informed him that his sins were not their business, and they refused to share any responsibility in the reckoning. Heartbroken, the Brahman returned to the holy ones, and gave them the decision of his family. The planets told him to call upon the god Rama for forgiveness, but so untaught was he, and so mispent had been his youth, the Brahman could not pronounce the god's name. With great patience the Rishis taught him to utter the name of the god, together with his prayer for mercy, and when he was able to address the god directly, white ants came out of the ground and covered him with a huge ant-hill which formed his grave. He was born again as a Rishi, named Valmiki (ant-hill), and the descendants of the children by his former wife started the Valmikudu caste. It

is always well for a caste to descend from a Brahman progenitor, no matter by which means.

The Valmikudu is one division of the Boyas caste. They are fearless hunters and wrestlers, and many of their wrestling matches are worth witnessing, notwithstanding the fact that they have only most primitive training, or no training at all. Their heads are shaved so that their opponents cannot seize them by the hair ; which, when not given to wrestling, this caste wears long. There is no science, either, in their use of dumb-bells and clubs, which are used solely to whip up the circulation. They stalk the bear on foot, and go right into the creature's retreat to try their strength against his. If they are employed by men for *shikari* (hunting), they drive the bear from his cover into the range of gun-shot. A party of them have been known to attack a bear with nothing but stout clubs, and in such a combat they are sure to have tied to their right arms their lucky talismans, which are usually a small figure of a Hanuman (monkey god). They use a bullock, or a tame deer, to stalk a herd of antelope. The herd is usually rounded up at a drawn net, where the *shikar* engagement must be swift and certain.

The women of this caste have their bodies tattooed or branded. Sometimes the designs are quite elaborate ; scorpions, serpents, and birds wrought in brilliant colours on the face, upper arms and chest. When they are branded by the priest, they become *Basavis* (dedicated prostitutes), and are devoted to a male deity. They are usually dedicated if there is no male child in the family. If a girl is ill, she frequently makes the vow that if she recovers she will become a *Basavi*. This does not mean, as is the case with some of the dancing girls, that a woman goes out to engage in the oldest profession and pass her earnings to the priest. The women of this caste are not cowed by Brahman threats. In fact, so little do they regard caste laws, they are often found living in concubinage with Mahommedans, and they have been known to attend the *Mohurram* and *Baqar 'Id* (Mohammedan festivals) with their lovers. After such dare-devilry, however, they cannot re-enter their houses until they have bathed.

The Valmikudu caste worships both Siva and Vishnu, and a number of minor gods to whom they sacrifice goats and sheep. They worship the snake by pouring milk into snake-



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THE MONKEY IS WORSHIPPED AS THE GOD  
HANUMAN





holes, and the holes of white ant-hills, which are so frequently occupied by snakes. The ant-hill being the burial place of their progenitor Valmiki as well as of the cobra, they thus offer a double worship. This caste does not engage Brahmans for religious purposes, but consults them only for auspicious hours for horoscopes when weddings are to be arranged.

The Valmikudu have an interesting preliminary to the marriage ceremony. A friend of the bridegroom goes to a dwelling to which he has been invited, carrying a knife with a lemon on the end of it. He is not permitted to enter the house, but is given some food in the cow-shed. When he has finished the meal he dashes from the shed, uttering piercing shrieks and furiously brandishing the knife. Unlike Lot's wife, he would not dream of looking behind him, but runs from the place as if pursued by wild beasts. The inmates of the house throw water on his nearer footsteps, and make very little show of following him. By watering his footsteps, any evil that might follow the marriage is done away with.

The caste members who propitiate their village goddess once a year, by giving a buffalo for sacrifice, pay no rent for their houses. The priest is alone when he sacrifices the animal, and it is said to bring misfortune if he is seen while thus engaged. After the sacrifice, the priest takes pieces of the animal, together with messes mixed with the blood, to all the houses in the village. The family in each house keeps out of the way while he delivers the sacred remains.

Widows, with the Valmikudu, may not remarry, but they may live with a man and have children by him. When a widow and a man whom she fancies decide to live together, they must prepare a feast to which all their relatives and friends are invited. If this custom is omitted, they are out-casted until it is observed. The offspring of such unions do not marry legitimate offspring, and to cope with the illegitimate influx many new divisions have been added to the caste.

If a man dies without being married he becomes a hero, and to his memory offerings are made and small temples are sometimes erected. If nothing is done for such a meritorious one, he haunts the members of his caste who are responsible for the omission.

## KURICCHANS

The Kuricchans are hunters, and live in the hilly districts of Malabar. They are excellent bowmen, and played an important part in the Pyche Rajas rebellion in the nineteenth century, but get very little opportunity to display their skill to-day. Unlike any other castes, they treat Brahmans with utter contempt. If a Brahman has been in the house of a Kuricchan, he purifies it as soon as the Brahman leaves. The place where the Brahman has been seated is smeared with cow-dung to overcome the pollution. These people consider themselves polluted by the approach (within a certain distance) of other hill tribes. The touch of a Tiyan or a Kamalan also pollutes them.

The Kuricchans act as oracles during the festival at Kottiyar. The divining power comes to the performer by gazing into a pot of gingelly-oil and holding a little wand of gold in his hand. They worship various deities, and propitiate certain demons. No blood sacrifices are made by them, but certain temple ceremonies are observed on auspicious days, after the temple is purified with cow-dung and urine. Lighted lamps are placed before all the deities, and food is arranged round the lamps. One of the community must become possessed and make oracular prophecies. The possessed person finally falls down, and at that moment the god is supposed to have left him. The temple performances are very tame, and after the oracle has spoken the people usually return home.

The Kuricchan weddings are very simple affairs. The bridegroom brings a new *sari* and a brass ring for the bride. The nuptial feast lasts only one day. Inheritance is through the female line. The husband must pay a bride-price to the bride's father, and must provide a new hut for the bride to occupy.

The Kuricchans kill fish and small birds by means of blowpipes. Fish, however, are sometimes killed with a weapon resembling a slung-shot. When the shot is discharged with the weapon, it trails a string which points out the place where the fish may be hauled up. This kind of fishing is practised in jungle streams. The Kuricchans use dogs to drive game from its retreat, and after a kill some of the flesh is offered to

the forest deity. A portion is also given to the dogs, and the remainder goes to the man who shot the first bullet (an arrow is sometimes used) into the animal.

### KADIRS

The Kadirs have lost their occupation, elephant tracking. The Government does not now permit elephants to be shot, unless they are mad, or what is usually called "rogue elephants." Anyone, however, is permitted to track down an elephant that has been judged insane ; such an animal being a danger to the community, and the sooner killed the better. Rogue elephants frequently crash through the village, destroying every hut they encounter and killing several people before they can be shot.

A butterfly enthusiast, who came to one of the villages near Coimbatore in search of rare specimens, came upon a rogue elephant during one of his expeditions. By good luck alone he managed to reach the bungalow of the friends he was visiting, having lost, as he explained, his only weapon—the butterfly-net. Another man, who was pursued by one of these ferocious beasts, managed to escape by throwing away his clothing, a piece at a time. The almost imperceptible hesitation of the elephant to trample anything in its path, allowed the man to reach his bungalow wearing no more than the law allows. Again, a story is told in Travancore of the very drowsy guest of a forestry officer who, when the boy rushed into his room and told him that an elephant was tearing the palm thatch from the roof, sleepily answered : "Tell him not to do that."

To-day if a Kadir finds elephant tusks in the jungle, he must report the fact to the Government. Ivory is a Government monopoly, and even the tusks of a rogue animal must be turned in. Many enthusiastic elephant hunters have lost their desire for the sport since the Government has claimed the spoils.

The Kadirs prefer to live in or near the forest, and only economic conditions have driven them down to the plains to seek employment. They are sturdy little people, with a fine chest girth and splendid muscles. They have no facial beauty whatever. Not long ago it was customary with them to chip

the teeth, and file them down to points which were stained black with a dye yielded from some root. This painful attempt to increase their beauty, however, is no longer popular, and only old men and women are seen to-day with damaged teeth.

Sometimes the Kadir women wear in their hair combs made of bamboo. Once, all the women wore these combs, as they were the betrothal present from the future bridegroom. The Madras museum has a collection of them, with curiously scratched designs.

The Kadirs' marriage ceremony is very simple. The couple exchange gifts, and the bride's father presents the bridegroom with a turban or some sort of head covering. Marriage can be dissolved for adultery or incompatibility, by simply appealing to a council of elders. Most Kadirs are polygamous, but mainly because of their desire for offspring. The first wife takes precedence over the others, and each wife cooks her own food and looks after her own children. When a girl reaches puberty, she gives herself a name. Before his time she answered to a number or a nickname.

Kadir women observe menstrual and confinement pollution. Sexual intercourse ceases when pregnancy is established, and is not resumed until the child is three or four months' old. These women have the habit (and it is not confined to this caste) of suckling a child until it is two or three years of age. The men will eat opium when they can obtain it, but forbid the women to eat it, in the belief that it makes them sterile.

The dead are buried, but their graves are never marked. This habit of forgetting where the corpse was placed, started the absurd story by early foreign settlers that the Kadirs eat their dead. The Kadirs believe that the dead go at once to heaven, and that what happens to the body is of no importance. Heaven is only a vague abode. The Kadir says that it is a place in the sky, but that is all he seems to know about it.

Many gods and demons are propitiated, and charms are worn to ward off disease and the attacks of a mythical elephant who lives in the heart of a mountain. Some of these people worship Siva, and until they are invested with the *lingam*, hang a crocodile tooth round their necks to imitate the phallus.

## CHAPTER VII

### CASTES. (TRADERS)

#### NAMBUTIRI-BRAHMANS

**C**ONTRARY to all we see written about the subjection of women in India, and the deplorable state of widows, the women of Malabar have complete economic independence and the right to marry, or not, as they choose. Because of the laws operating among the Malabar castes, and especially the law governing inheritance, the woman retains her property, while the children belong to her own caste when she "marries," as is frequently the case, into a caste outside her own.

It is a strange fact that free love, which has caused so much argument and discussion in the West, has been practised in Malabar for years. In the highest caste of Malabar, the Nambudri-Brahmana (and all other Brahmans of India rank lower than the Nambutiri-Brahmans in their own estimation), only the eldest son marries and he is polygamous. This provides every girl of his caste with a husband, and he inherits all the property by law. But frequently he refuses to take everything from his brothers and sisters, and contents himself with administering the family wealth. His "wives" may do as they please.

When the Nair woman "marries," her husband is under her control. She frequently marries a Nambudri, because his caste is higher than her own. The men are at perfect liberty to take up a woman and drop her, while women have the same privilege with the men.

Marriage, indeed, seems to be of little importance in the highest circles. The Rajas of Travancore and Cochin do not marry. The niece of the Maharaja of Travancore is properly married to one of her own caste, and it is the son of this marriage who succeeds in line. The niece of the Maharaja of Cochin is "married" to a Nambudri, to give her children

the prestige of higher caste. These two Rajas take "wives" from the Nair caste. Travancore's "wife" is kept in seclusion; Cochin's "wife" is not secluded. One must not get the impression that the *gosha* (seclusion), as it is called in the south, which exists for these women, is the same as the *purdah* of the north. These women do not cover from members of their own caste; they simply put up huge umbrellas before other castes.

The children born to the rajas are absorbed into the Nair caste, and it is impossible for the Malabar women to become widows, since they are not married according to the true meaning of the word.

### NAIR

The Nair woman may unite herself with a man of her own caste, or with one of a superior caste. To cohabit with a man of a lower caste would bring disgrace upon her family, and she would, no doubt, be outcasted. She frequently aspires to a Brahman consort, but there are many Nair women who consider men of their own caste quite worthy of them.

If a Nair woman has children by an orthodox Brahman, the father, after touching his children, must bathe to remove pollution. The child, too, of such a union cannot touch his father's corpse. He follows his father's body to the burning-ground, but he does not assist at the funeral ceremony. After intercourse with the mother of his children, purification is not necessary for the Brahman. A man may cohabit with a woman of inferior caste, but a woman shares no such privilege. A woman raises the prestige of her caste by having children by a man of superior caste. The Nair woman, according to the custom of her people, is free to cohabit with any man she likes, but, be it said to her credit, she is usually off with the old love before she is on with the new. There are, of course, exceptions to this decency; where girls are too mercenary, and cannot resist the temptation of receiving gifts.

The Nair woman observes three days' menstrual pollution, during which time she is attended by a washer-woman. Some members of the caste explain the Nair woman's objection to travel, as due to the fact that she will not stray far from the menstrual hut. There are many Nair women, however, who

live in the Madras Presidency because their "husbands" have obtained positions there.

This caste, while it has descended illegitimately from polyandry and polygamy, is apt to look down upon lower castes, because in any number of cases it can trace its descent in a left-handed course from the royal line. The Nairs were formerly a military body who lived with the nobles and were treated with the utmost respect. They were educated according to the system of the day. The agility of their bodies was thought to be of the greatest importance, and gymnastics and the use of weapons were taught them extensively. They gave no person of a lower caste any consideration on the roads, and if one of these unfortunates happened to touch a Nair he was killed. If a Pariah accidentally touched a Nair lady, her relatives were killed, together with the man who touched her and all his relations. To-day the Pariahs are careful to keep out of the way of the Nairs on the road ; for, while the Government would not tolerate the execution of the culprit, secret revenge is not to be encountered.

In former days, when the women had several husbands, the man left his sword outside the woman's house, to inform any other husband who might wish to enter that it was not his turn.

When Tipu Sultan took his Mohammedan magnificence to Malabar, he severely berated the Nairs for their immorality. He told them that they left their mothers and sisters unconstrained in obscene practices, and consequently they were all born in adultery and were more shameless than the beasts. He ordered them to forsake their sinful habits and live like the rest of mankind. The "old Tiger of Mysore" was more given to preaching than to practising. His edict was not very rigidly followed, and the people gave up polyandry for something slightly different. The change occurred mostly in terminology.

To say that there is no marriage ceremony in this caste, is not quite the truth. A girl may be married to a dummy or a tree, or even a bamboo shoot, as occurs before she has reached puberty. Sometimes she is "married" (a mock marriage) to a boy. If a woman dies a virgin (an impossibility, I believe), she cannot go to paradise.

In these mock marriage ceremonies the girl's horoscope is



examined to find an auspicious day, while a boy, whose horoscope is in agreement with the girl's, is chosen to tie the marriage cord about the girl's neck. This ceremony takes place in a *pandal* (a booth erected for the purpose). When the boy enters the booth, his feet are washed by the brother of the girl. The girl receives from her family two new costumes. The relations stand about beating tom-toms and making a frightful noise. The boy takes the seat of honour on a bamboo mat, or a piece of carpet. The girl's brother carries the girl out of the house and, after passing three times round the *pandal*, he enters and places her beside the boy. The two children then slip off the clothes they are wearing and put on the new ones. Some woman usually steps up at this point and puts anklets on the girl.

The children then go outside the *pandal* and squat on the ground. A stick or a spike is driven into the earth, and when this object no longer casts any shadow, the moment has arrived to tie the marriage cord. The children thereupon go to the temple and make offerings of rice and flowers to the gods. They return to the *pandal*, and eat some food from the same leaf. They are then carried to some decorated room in the girl's house, where they remain under pollution for three days. On the fourth day they bathe in the tank, while their families and others stand about and cheer. When they return to the house, the girl's father tears a piece of cloth in two and gives half to the boy and the other half to the girl. This is to constitute divorce.

The boy may tie the marriage cord on the necks of several girls at the same time. The girl, or girls, on whom he ties the cord, may see no more of him during life, but at his death these girls observe pollution even if they are living with men.

The Brahman benefits mostly at these marriage ceremonies, for the girl's father feeds as many as he possibly can. Rich Nairs have been known to feed 2000 Brahmans, and to spend thousands of rupees on the feasts which accompany the ceremony. Owing to the expense of these ceremonies, many boys and girls (if their horoscopes are in order) are married at the same time. This ceremony, or the ceremony of marrying a girl to a tree or dummy, is necessary in case she dies while she is very young. In other words, before she is old enough to cohabit with a man.

There is another ceremony which takes place when the couple intends actually to have sexual relations.

As in the ceremony for children, the first thing is to examine the horoscopes, and, in fact, no man may take a woman to his house until this is done. The bride's room is then decorated—especially the bed, which is strewn with jasmine flowers. Five lighted lamps are placed in the room, odd numbers in the matter of lights being believed to be auspicious. Eight articles, symbolic of marriage, are placed on the floor : rice, an arrow, a small mirror, a piece of silk, fire, leaves of the cocoanut, and a sprig of margosa.

The bridegroom, with some male members of his family, enters the room by one door and the bride, accompanied by her aunt, enters by another. The bride faces the lighted lamps. The bridegroom passes presents to the man who accompanies him, and he in turn passes them to the bride. The presents vary according to the circumstances of the bridegroom. Sometimes the gifts are money and silk, sometimes but glass bangles and a piece of cotton.

The bride's aunt sprinkles rice on the lamps, and the bridegroom leaves the room. He goes to his men friends, and distributes betel-nut and cakes. The next morning, if the couple are about the same age, the bride is taken to the husband's house. If the bride is older, she cohabits with one of her husband's relatives until her husband is of age. The Nair men do not enter into sex relations at such an early age as the men of other castes.

Inheritance in the Nair caste goes to the brothers by the same mother, or to the sons of their sisters ; as all relationship is reckoned from the female descent. The story goes that marriage was prohibited in this caste, to enable the men to devote their energy to military service.

In the eighteenth century the Nair women removed their *sari* in the presence of royalty, but this custom no longer continues.

The Nair women are the most beautiful women in India. Their bodies (with very few exceptions) would cause a sculptor to take out his sketch-book and sharpen his pencil. They wear very little clothing, but what they do wear is frequently washed and changed. Their hair never looks greasy as other Indian hair, and they wash it frequently with the pods of

saponaceous plants. Their skin is their great pride, and any eruption on it is considered a disgrace. They wear no head-dress, but often decorate their hair with flowers. They mutilate their beauty in but one way—the lobes of their ears are dilated with pieces of metal. Contrary to the usual custom, they have their nose-ring in the left nostril, and they wear many gold bracelets and finger-rings. No Indian woman wears toe-rings of gold, but they carry many charms. A lucky ring may bring a union with the men they desire, or it may increase their beauty. A favourite talisman consists of the hair from an elephant's tail, plaited and worn on the wrist. They frequently present their gods with a bangle, or a ring, if these worthies grant their desires. The older women of the Nair caste are sometimes tattooed, but this decoration is shunned by the younger generation.

No Nair, man or woman, will eat without having first bathed, and they also bathe before entering the temple. As a Nair goes home from the temple with his caste mark newly outlined on his forehead, he cries out most of the way to warn inferiors of his approach. If one should not hear, and should approach too closely, it would be necessary for him to return to the temple and to be redecorated.

It is said that the Nairs are the best educated people of Malabar. Even the Brahmans are not supposed to be their equal in this respect. Many of them have risen to the higher positions in the Government and in the professions.

#### LINGAYATS

The Lingayats (worshippers of the *lingam*) have five headquarters of their community in various parts of India. This distribution was caused by Siva, who at the first moment of creation appeared in five different forms. Theoretically, anyone who possesses a *lingam* (if it were bestowed upon him with priestly rites) can become a Lingayat. In the teachings of the founder (Basava) we learn that the humble hut of the Pariah, if it contains the sacred *lingam*, is above the most magnificent palace in the world.

It is also said that this caste does not recognize the supremacy of the Brahmans. Whatever were the original views of the founder, or the caste's early practices, the fact remains

that these people copy the customs and habits of the Brahmans, and seek at all times to curry favour with the illustrious ones. It is true that the Lingayats have made converts from other castes, but the all-embracing idea of the founder is a dead letter to-day. Acquiring a *lingam* by priestly rites will by no means admit one to the caste now.

The Hindus, because of their love for argument and dispute, have divided their opinion concerning the foundation of this caste. Some say that it was founded by Basava (the usual recognized founder), while others say that Basava simply revised an already existing and extremely ancient religion. This is not surprising. There is nothing on earth that educated Hindus will not deny or affirm, if they can find anyone to listen to them. The music which delights the ear of the average Hindu is his own voice, and that which pleases his eye is his name in print. I would digress here a moment to emphasize this fact by mentioning a recent experience.

One evening I went in Bangalore to hear a lecture on certain phases of Hinduism. The lecturer arrived very much bedecked with trailing orange scarf and garlands of flowers. The chairman's introduction over, the decorated speaker stood on the platform and looked at the worthies sitting to left and right of him. Then he looked at the audience. A wide smile lighted up his face, and he started to compliment the people on the platform. No one was slighted, each one was eulogized. When he had finished with the platform, the lecturer turned his attention and his smile to the audience. His first compliments were delivered *en bloc*, then he selected certain ones to be the special recipients of his favours. About one hour and a half later someone called his attention to the clock. His time was up. He had forgotten his lecture, and had to return the following evening to deliver it.

Scholars say that the Lingayat religion cannot claim any greater antiquity than the twelfth century. This caste worships Siva, rejecting the other gods. They reverence the Vedas, but disregard the later commentaries from which the Brahmans take so many of their laws. They purport to have cleared their faith of priestly mysticism, and deny the need for sacrifices, penances and pilgrimages. Their symbol is the *jangama*, or movable *lingam*, as distinguished from the fixed *lingam* of the temples. Not for a moment are they allowed

to put their *lingam* down, but day and night must carry it attached to their bodies. It is worn on the head, the chest, tied round the waist, or on the arm. It is placed in the left hand of a corpse. To lose it (although another can be obtained after much ceremony), is said to delay the soul's progress.

There are several legends concerning the birth of Basava, the founder of the Lingayat.

A popular one is to the effect that to Madiraja and his wife Madolambika, of a place called Bijapur district, a son was born who was the incarnation of Siva's bull. He was sent to teach the Siva rites, and when he was eight years old, the age to be invested with the Brahmanical thread, he declared himself a special representative of Siva, stating that he came to destroy all caste distinctions. This refusal to accept the thread attracted the notice of his uncle Baladeva, the prime minister to King Bijjala and who had come to witness the ceremony. So impressed was his uncle that he at once gave the boy his daughter, Gangamba, in marriage.

The Brahmans, however, began to persecute young Basava, because of certain practices encouraged by him, and their persecution continued until he was compelled to leave his village. But his virtue had become known, the King Bijjala, on hearing of his self-imposed exile, sent for him. The king appointed him as commander-in-chief and treasurer of his state, and in order to bind him more closely to his kingdom gave him his youngest sister, Nilalochana, as wife.

Basava was in the habit of worshipping Siva on the top of a mountain, and one day when he was praying for some special gift, he saw an ant emerge from the ground with a small seed in its mouth. Basava took the seed home, but his sister, who lived with him, swallowed it without his knowledge and became pregnant. When the child was born he was named, for obvious reasons, Basava the beautiful, while, being a reincarnation of Siva, he spent his life assisting his uncle to spread the doctrine of Siva.

The Puranas recount at great and tiresome length the virtues of these saints of Siva. They preached the extermination of all whose creed differed from their own, and in time the royal coffers were so depleted by the two Basavas, in their efforts to bring the world under Siva's rule, that the king

began to distrust them. He told some of his followers of his losses, and they plotted the death of Basava the elder. Owing to some unforeseen event, however, the king and Basava were assassinated together.

The story in the Purana wanders about in true Indian style, giving itself many beginnings and many endings. One story says that the king took Basava's sister as concubine, and that the seed (which in another story she swallowed) had a human origin and came forth as the king's son. In this version of the story, Basava is said to have sent a poisoned fruit to the king which caused his death, and to escape the vengeance of his son by the concubine to have thrown himself into a well.

Later translations of the Purana show that all these stories are erroneous. Evidence coming to light through archaeological discovery throws great doubt on the accuracy of the Puranic narrative in any of its translations. Even so, the Indians can find a reason for each of the contradictory stories being true.

Whatever legend may say of Basava, the fact is pretty clear that he was the first Indian free-thinker. He might be called the Luther of India. The acknowledged leadership of the priests was in full swing when Basava came upon the scene, and there was a movement on foot to replace caste and priestly authority with intelligence and free-thinking. Basava, a Sivaite Brahman, was in the camp of the liberals. He mounted the rostrum for the abolition of caste and ceremonies, and preached that all men were by birth equal, that one sex was as important as another, that child marriage was wrong, and that widows should be permitted to remarry. He promised the Lingayats the freedom of individual action. All wearers of the divine *lingam* were to occupy a common level; they were to eat together and to intermarry. For a while the simplicity of his teaching appealed to the people, but soon, as they increased in wealth and numbers, they wanted their old distinctions back, as these increased their importance. Ceremonies and elaborate ritual crept into their worship, and thus, as new converts entered they were placed on a lower strata, while the priests got back their old power and again became the privileged caste.

To-day the Lingayat has almost as many ceremonial observances as other castes. Proof of this lies in the fact that

many Lingayats now wish to be described as Virasaiva Brahmans. Members desiring to be so designated visited the Maharaja of Mysore with their request. The Maharaja's Government passed an order to the effect that, since other Brahmans were not so classed, Lingayats should not be either. They were at liberty to call themselves Virasaiva Brahmans, but they should specify the name of the particular subdivision to which each unit belonged. The Maharaja's kindness had a very amusing sequel. On the day of the religious festival of the Lingayats, they applied for a license to carry their flagstaff. The other castes, however, objected on the ground that the Lingayats had become Brahmans. Faced with such a result of their newly-granted superiority, many of them were glad to regain their old status.

The Lingayats, whose descendants live in the village of Chembrambakam, north and south Arcot, and Chingleput, were supposed to immigrate from Mysore when Chikka Deva Raja ruled over that province. The ruler's measures to suppress insurrection which had been fomented by the Lingayats were thorough and effective. An invitation was sent to all dissenting factions, to meet the Raja at one of the greater temples. A large pit resembling an elephant-trap had been previously prepared in a walled enclosure, and a canopy was arranged over this where the audience was received one at a time. As each person made his obeisance, an executioner skilfully beheaded him and he tumbled into the pit. Not one of the seven hundred guests was alarmed. Each man believed that the man who had preceded him had passed into the refreshment tent, and the reception ended without suspicion. For a clean-cut and restful execution party there is nothing to parallel this in history.

Anyone wishing to join the Lingayats caste must undergo a three days' purification ceremony. On the first day the face and head are shaved, and the convert must have a bath in cow's urine and manure. He is permitted to eat and drink the urine and manure, but he must abstain from any other food. On the second day he bathes in the water in which the priests' feet have been washed. He is then permitted to drink milk. On the third day, after a cow's urine bath, he has a paste made of bananas, milk, melted butter and honey applied to his head. This is washed off with water. The

priest then ties the *lingam* round his neck, and he has become a Lingayat.

This caste does not observe pollution. When a girl matures, she takes an oil bath and puts on new clothes and ornaments. Married women visit her, bringing cocoanuts, dates, limes, betel leaves and rice. These offerings are placed on the girl's lap, and the women pass round her waving *arati* (lamp to keep off the evil eye). The married women depart after food has been given to them by the girl's mother, and there is no ceremony at any future menstrual period.

The pregnant woman receives no special diet before, or during, her confinement. A village midwife officiates at the birth. She is helped by the female relatives, who bathe the mother and child. On the third day there is a ceremony to worship the afterbirth, which the midwife buries just outside the entrance door. Over the grave she throws a piece of thread which has been dipped in tumeric paste, and some rice. The mother and the women who are helping with the ceremony wear pieces of thread on their right wrists. The women have brought presents which the midwife takes, together with the money she is paid. This ceremony is observed in the belief that the mother's breasts will be bountifully supplied with milk. She is not allowed to suckle her child until the ceremony is performed. On the same day the child receives his *lingam* from the priest.

The child is named on the fifteenth day. Married women go to a well, or a stream, where they worship Gangamma. They return with a new pot filled with water. The mother, who has been waiting at the door, receives the pot and places it on some unhusked rice under the cradle. The child's aunt or uncle gives the name, after which all the women present assault each other, and whoever has given the name, with their fists. Food is served by the mother, and the guests depart.

Sexual license before marriage is not permitted ; nor is prostitution tolerated. There are dedicated prostitutes amongst the Lingayats, but open prostitution is punished by excommunication. Polygamy is allowed, but marriage between brothers' or sisters' children is prohibited. Sometimes marriage is also prohibited between second cousins. The contracting couple have no individual choice, marriage being arranged by the families, who agree, or not, according to the



price offered for the bride. Fifty rupees is usually the price for a first marriage; a second marriage costs more. The ancestors are usually worshipped before a wedding. Basava permitted widows to remarry, but where the divisions of the caste have come under Brahman rule this is discontinued.

When a widow remarries, the ceremony is very simple. There is no music, and no guests attend. The couple go to the temple with the priest and a bangle seller. The priest ties the *tali* (marriage badge) on the bride's neck, and the bangle seller puts glass bangles on her wrists. No bachelor, only a widower, will marry a widow; and a widow will do so only as his second wife. Married widows cease to belong to their first husband's family, while children of a second marriage inherit the property of their own father.

Divorce is permitted on proof of adultery. A husband can divorce his wife immediately upon proof of misconduct, but the wife can divorce her husband only if he is outcasted. Divorced women cannot remarry. In some divisions of the caste, however, neither husband nor wife will demand a divorce. The couple simply separate, and in such case only the husband is allowed to "remarry" again.

A peculiarity of this caste is that the priest is worshipped before the deity; in fact, before Siva. The priest is supposed to be a reincarnation of the deity, and worshippers frequently drink the water in which the priest has washed his feet. Members of the caste wash their *lingams* in holy water (cow's urine) before each meal. Monday is Siva's day, and on that day Lingayats refuse to work.

The day of the new moon is devoted to the worship of Parvati, Siva's wife. The goddess is presented with coconuts, flowers, twenty-one threads with a knot in each, and a fan with twenty-one fastenings. The fan is passed round the goddess twenty-one times. A new pot represents the goddess, and the knotted threads remain before her all night. The next morning the women of the household take an oil bath and put on new clothes. Just before daybreak they heap up mounds of cow-dung on either side of the outer door, and these they sprinkle with milk and melted butter. They then worship the heaps with *mantrams*.

The feast of the *holi*<sup>1</sup> takes place on the day of the full moon.

<sup>1</sup> Festival of the god Kama—the Indian Eros.

Beyond eating too much, this feast is not observed by this caste. The same feast is known as Fagwa in Assam, where the people use filthy language and sprinkle one another with red ink.

The death ceremony with the Lingayats takes place before the patient is dead. When he is dying, he is made to drink holy water in which the priest's feet have been washed. He must also pass the priest a handkerchief (or a small piece of cloth) and a coin. When this is done, all present have a lively feast. This ceremony lacks the consideration of the Irish wake, for the Irish allow the invalid to die in peace. There have been "deaths" where the corpse has survived this ceremony. If he survives he is supposed to disappear, but this practice is not observed to-day.

After death the corpse is placed in a sitting position ; unless he or she was unmarried, in which case the body is placed on its side. The *lingam* is placed in the left hand, a yellow scarf is thrown over the body, and the grave is filled in. A priest stands on the grave and shouts the name of the deceased, saying that he has gone to *Kailasa* (Siva's heaven).

Annual services for the dead were forbidden by Basava, but owing to Brahman influence they are usually observed. Special ceremonies are performed for any who have died a violent death.

The Lingayats are prohibited from such work as is required of a toddy drawer, a sweeper, a leather worker, or a butcher. Such is their abhorrence of leather, no Lingayat would use a bucket (for irrigation, or other purposes) which has a leather handle. Sandals, again, are never touched with the hands ; the feet are pushed into them.

Many Lingayats are agriculturists. Some engage in the making of dairy produce, and others are flower or oil sellers. Before ploughing is done the team of bullocks is worshipped. Their horns are covered with sacred ashes, and a cocoanut is broken on their yoke. Their superstitions concerned with sowing and reaping and threshing seem endless, and for an example one will suffice. A mound of cow-dung is placed on the threshing-floor. The top of it is decorated with the hair from the tails of the bullocks, wound about a freshly-cut creeper, and before it, betel leaves and broken cocoanuts are spread. These messes are scattered by a man who places a

pot of water before the mound. After he has saluted it and made certain passes with his hands, food is given to the cultivators, and a heap of grain, which had been piled up on one side of the cow-dung, is equally divided between them.

The Lingayats prefer to eat only with members of their own caste, but Brahman influence has, to some extent, broken down this preference. They abstain from liquor of any sort, and are strict vegetarians.

### LINGA BALIJA

The Linga Baliyas, who were directly descended from Siva's *lingam* when Siva was on earth, remove the image of the *lingam* from their arms or necks before transacting business. To explain this, they say that it is necessary to tell lies in the course of business, and there is no sin attached to the falsehoods if the *lingam* is not worn. Each member of this caste eats privately, and it is also necessary that they should not be observed while eating. They refuse to eat away from home and will not do so even in the house of a Brahman.

### KAMMAN

The Kamman, a Telugu caste, has any number of totems, or divisions, to its credit. All divisions, however, seem to have come from the same Dravidian stock. Soldiering was their original profession, but now they are traders, agriculturists, and in the north *zemindars* (landowners). Formerly many of the women were *gosha* (kept in seclusion), and no respectable woman would leave her compound. There was a word in their language, meaning to stay at home, which when applied to the woman was the highest form of praise. One economic crisis after another has altered these habits of seclusion, and a wife is glad enough to-day to work in the fields with her husband.

Various childish stories are current to explain the origin of the Kamman. One relates that they were formerly Kashatriyas (one of the four leading castes), but one unfortunate member of the tribe called their king a bastard, and as the result of this insult they were all outcasted. They sought refuge, then, with the Kapus, whose customs they adopted, and in time they became a powerful division of the Kapus,

calling themselves Kammans. In actual fact, the origin of the Kammans was the same as that of any other caste. It evolved simply out of trade conditions and local circumstances.

The Kamman bridegroom is often much younger than the bride, being a mere child when she is working in the fields. As the party of the bridegroom proceeds to the bride's house on the day of the wedding, it must watch for favourable omens on the road. Failing to see anything auspicious, the party must return to the bridegroom's house and start again. When a lucky omen is seen, such as birds flying in the right direction, or a sun-cast shadow falling across the road at the right spot, the bridegroom's friends burn camphor and break a cocoanut. The cocoanut must split with straight edges, and cocoanuts are broken until one divides itself in a satisfactory manner. One half of the fruit is then sent to the bridegroom, and the other half is taken to the bride's house.

During the marriage ceremony, hero-worship is performed. This is done by the whole assembly going to a pipal tree (*ficus religiosa*). Yellow thread is wound round the trunk of the tree several times, and worshipped. The priest then ties some thread round the wrists of the bride and bridegroom. After this they return to the house, where a short cloth is placed between them. Under it the bridegroom places his big toe on the big toe of the bride, and over the top of it he ties the *tali* round her neck.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CASTES. (WEAVERS)

#### KURUBAS

**N**OT until I saw carpets manufactured by the Kurubas in their village, called Masulipatam, could I understand my cat's penchant for my drawing-room and study carpets. He had nibbled a large hole in one, and had pulled most of the fringe off the other. No amount of slapping or scolding could discourage his peculiar appetite in this respect, and later, when I saw the Kurubas weaving their carpets, I understood what was such an irresistible attraction for the animal.

The sheep, whose wool is to be used in making carpets, are bathed before shearing in some kind of sticky mess. The wool is then separated into little piles, according to its colour, and the wool from each pile is beaten bit by bit. After the cleaning process, which does not seem entirely to remove the sticky mixture, the wool is spun into yarn on a primitive spinning-wheel, whirled by a stick. As each quantity of yarn is spun, it is smeared with a paste made of tamarind seeds and milk, in order to stiffen the threads. Evidently the smell of the paste never leaves the carpet, as those so beloved by my cat were at least three years old.

All Indian carpets, however, are not made in this way. Many northern manufacturers export their carpets all over the world, and the duplicate orders of the purchasers prove that quality and durability have been achieved.

The Kurubas are divided, and subdivided, many times. Each division has a headman, who gives his own name to his clan. The origin of the caste, like so many others, is mixed up with legend rather than set down in history.

The poverty of the Kurubas (who formerly lived unclothed in the jungles, their only food being roots and leaves) is said to have attracted the pity of Siva, who appeared to them in

the guise of a priest. At one house he left sacred ashes, promising the birth of another son who was to be named Undala Padmanna. After the birth of Undala Padmanna, the family immediately became prosperous. Unlike his six brothers, Undala refused to work in the fields. His brothers thought him very lazy, and contrived to get rid of him. They asked him to set fire to some brush-wood, which concealed an ant-hill. They knew that a snake lived in the hole of the ant-hill, and they hoped that it would come out and kill him. But, instead of the snake, a large flock of sheep appeared, and, frightened at the sight of the sheep, Undala took to his heels.

Siva then appeared in Undala's pathway, and told him that the sheep had been created for his livelihood. Siva taught him, moreover, how to milk the sheep, and how to make curds of the milk. The curds were to be his food, instead of the roots and leaves. Siva also showed him how to shear the sheep, and how to weave the wool.

Not being able to finish any "good works" without marriage, Siva sent Undala to a distant town which was occupied by giants. The giants were keeping in bondage a beautiful Brahman girl, who promptly fell in love with Undala. He helped her to escape, and took her back to his village and his flock. He had several sons by her, and later he married a girl of his own caste and had other sons. The sons of his first marriage were called *Atti* (cotton) and those of his second marriage *Unni* (woollen). The descendants of the latter division are considered inferior.

This legend accounts for only two divisions of the caste, and it fails to tell how the other innumerable divisions came into existence. Sometimes the Kuruba is called the milk caste. Kurubas are so stupid that their caste name has become synonymous with simpleton.

When a Karuba man wishes to marry, he examines the heads of his girl friends. The would-be bride must possess curls of good fortune. This method of selection is used by other castes, but only when selecting cows or bulls. A good curl is found on the bull's forehead, and a bad one at the back of his head. The same applies to the Kuruba girls; a curl near the right temple indicating that her husband will die young.

At the marriage ceremony a piece of cloth is placed between the couple, so they cannot see each other. After *mantrams* the cloth is removed, and the bridegroom takes the bride to the Hanuman temple, where married women throw rice over them. They return to the bride's house, and there are bathed in different squares by relatives. Clothed in new costumes, they sit on the floor in the room where the guests have assembled. A large metal pot is filled with rice and curds, and round it the relatives of the couple gather and despatch the food. The number of those who partake must be odd, and must stuff the food into their mouths and swallow it as quickly as possible. If one or more of them become sick afterwards, it is considered an omen of impending misfortune. In certain divisions of the caste it is an indication of the bad character of the bride.

Widows, their curls being in order, are allowed to remarry.

If the birth of the child is delayed until the second year, it is considered a good omen. The mother and child must occupy separate huts until the eleventh day after delivery. On the twelfth day the husband goes to market, and asks anyone he happens to meet what he shall name the child. Women of this caste frequently borrow a baby when they are confined, as they believe that having a baby in the bed with them assures a safe delivery.

The Kuruba dead are buried. Those who were married are placed with the face upwards; the unmarried, face downwards. The grave must be dug north and south, with the head facing the south. The stretcher-bearers, who carry the body to the grave, are not allowed to enter their houses for five days after the burial, and are fed at the expense of the deceased's relatives. Pollution is observed for ten days. On the eleventh day the eldest son of the departed carries a pot of water to a lonely place, empties it, and returns to the house without looking behind. This is supposed to keep the spirit from troubling his relatives. The family then kill sheep and chickens, and a feast is given to the entire village.

The Kurubas do not ride on horses as these are the vehicles of their gods.

In one of their temples there is a figure of an old man, who settled the dispute about wages between the builder of the temple and his workmen. On stated occasions the figure

is bathed in oil and worshipped. The Mysore Kurubas worship a box which is said to contain the wearing apparel of the god Krishna. The household goddess, Kelu Devaru, is worshipped annually at the Dasara festival, and the pot that represents her is made by a potter who must have but one meal a day during its manufacture. He must knead the clay with his hands, after they are wetted with cocoanut milk. When at work his mouth must be closed with a bandage, as his breath would defile the pot.

At their festivals the Kurubas sometimes break cocoanuts on the head of some chosen member of the caste, who is then believed to be possessed by the deity. They break cocoanuts on the head of their sacred bull during worship, and on the heads of the priests who officiate at this rite. Often the priests break cocoanuts on those who are standing nearest to them during the ceremony. Considering that it usually takes an axe to smash a cocoanut-shell, the skulls of this caste must be unusually strong. The Kuruba girls are no longer dedicated to the temples as prostitutes.

This is one of the oldest castes in south India, and certain scholars believe that they antedate their Dravidian kinsmen.

A backward division of this caste, which still occupies the jungle, has a very interesting way of scaring off an elephant. They rush at the animal with a lighted torch, made of burning rags tied on to a stick, whereupon it usually turns and bolts. Should it stand its ground, however, they push the torch against the creature's head. The contact of the flame always has the desired effect, and the elephant hurls its huge body off into the jungle as if shot from a catapult. The tables are turned if the encounter occurs in the daytime, and the attackers run with all speed for safety.

The women of this same backward division usually prefer another man to their husbands, and widows do not relinquish carnal pleasures while they are waiting for a second marriage. No child is considered illegitimate.

Among the Kurubas of the Nilgiris, it is the custom for several brothers to take one wife in common, and they do not object to sharing her with other men of the caste. There is no marriage ceremony; the woman simply rolling a long cheroot, which she smokes with each man in turn.



The men of the Nilgiris division trade largely on their supposed magical powers. Other castes dare not anger them for fear of the visitation of some spell or disease.

Still another division of the caste insists upon a girl being married before reaching puberty. If for some reason no husband can be found for her before this time, she must go through a mock marriage with her grandfather.

### PADMA-SALES

The Padma-Sales, a Telugu-speaking, cloth-weaving caste of the Madras Presidency, worship the tiger, and believe that no tiger will attack them.

The progenitors of this caste were Adigadu, Padigadu, and Baludu, which three illustrious beings were born from the sweat of Bhavana Rishi. In the beginning, when men were naked, one of the gods told Bhavana Rishi (a fire god) to weave cloth to cover the bodies of men. From the lotus (the lotus springs from Vishnu's navel) a bundle of thread was obtained, and Bhavana Rishi wove the cloth of this lotus-thread. When he presented the cloth to the god who had commanded him to weave it, however, the god refused to accept it, saying he wanted a tiger-skin. Bhavana Rishi thereupon hurried to *Kailasa*, to see Siva and ask that deity to help him. On the way he met a tiger whom he tried to slay, and in this battle he got into a profuse sweat which, as the moisture dripped from his body to the ground, formed itself into three men. In fact, it became the three men who created the Padma-Sales. Bhavana Rishi and his three sweat-born sons then tried to overcome the tiger, but the animal got away. When they arrived at *Kailasa*, they found standing beside Siva the same animal they had wounded on the road. After Siva had listened to Bhavana Rishi's story, he took up a handful of sacred ashes and sprinkled it over the tiger, and immediately the tiger cast his skin. In triumph Bhavana Rishi bore the skin to the god who had commanded him to procure it, and the god, in better humour on this occasion, made the sweat-born sons the creators of the Padma-Sales, commanding them and their descendants to worship the tiger.

## KURMIS

The Kurmis, a caste of weavers, permit widows to remarry after spending two nights alone in two different temples. Their wedding ceremonies are performed by other widows. They are the only people in India who permit women to perform the marriage ceremony. A widow, after remarriage, is not allowed to take part in religious rites.

One division of this caste neither smokes, drinks, nor eats meat. The other divisions do all three.

## CHAPTER IX

### CASTES. (BEGGARS)

#### SAMAYA

**T**HE arrest last June of a Brahman Kaviraj, for selling his wife, brings to mind the Samaya caste which used to flourish in Mysore. The caste still exists, but, owing to Government interference, is now shorn of its power. It consisted of religious mendicants, invested with authority to censor morals. Marriage, death, and birth ceremonies were not undertaken unless representatives of the Samaya caste were present. Needless to say, whoever officiated received substantial fees in payment.

Under former Rajas of Mysore, this office was farmed out and credited in the public accounts. The greater part of the profits arose from the sale of women accused of adultery, or from fines imposed on them for their infidelity. These women were known as Government wives. In some cases the women were outcasted and branded on the arm as prostitutes, and had to pay an annual sum to the priest as long as they lived, while when they died their property became his. This sale of women did not occur in remote places, neither was it done in secret ; but in large cities like Bangalore, under the eyes of Europeans. In this same city a building was set apart for traffic in these unfortunate women. Desperate measures were finally necessary on the part of the Europeans to abolish the detestable traffic.

As the Brahman Kaviraj, who sold his wife, explained in court, he had inherited his father-in-law's property, and had been living with his first wife and his mother-in-law at the house of his father in the village of Orain. He married a second wife, Nagarbashi Devi, aged fourteen, and brought her to the house to live with the first wife and her mother. Since that time the girl had been subjected to inhuman treatment by the other two, and it was further alleged that the accused

eventually sold the girl to one, Bepin Behari Das, of Noakhali, for one hundred and fifty rupees. The girl's brother lodged a complaint with the police who arrested Chakravarty, the Brahman Kaviraj. The magistrate, under the influence of Hindu prejudice, did not bind the girl over to some home, but placed her in the custody of the defence pleader and fixed a date for the rehearing of the case.

### NOKKAN-PALLI

The legitimate occupation of the Nokkan caste is to prey upon the Palli caste. This is because a Nokkan once sacrificed herself for the Palli deity at Conjeeveram, the holy city of the south. The legend has only praise for the Nokkan merchant who gave his pregnant daughter to the Palli god. The car bearing the god had stopped, and could not move until a human sacrifice had been made. The merchant, seeing that this was the moment to distinguish himself and win lasting favour for his caste, led his pregnant daughter out and flung her under the wheels of the car. The King of the Pallis was so pleased with the unselfish behaviour of the Nokkan he promised that henceforth any member of the Nokkan caste could beg from the Pallis either food or money.

The Pallis are descended from fire-born heroes. Two penitents obtained from Siva the promise that they should not die at the hands of any womb-born beings, and that no child in their dominions should die. One of the penitents married a goddess, who was born from the cheeks of Parvati (one of Siva's wives). The penitent and the goddess lighted the sacred fire, out of the flames of which arose a heavenly being with many warriors. From these warriors and their leader the Pallis are descended.

Whatever the holy origin of the Pallis may have been, they are rather a disreputable people to-day. They worship Agni (fire) and the monkey god Hanuman. They also worship the tiger, although this ritual varies in different districts. They permit the Nökkans to assist at their marriages, and to carry banners and lamps in their parades. The Nökkans make frequent visits to the Palli homes, where they receive rice and small amounts of money.

Many are the disgusting animal sacrifices practised by the

Pallis to the fire god. The Nokkans are Brahmans, and wear the sacred thread.

### DONGA-DASARI

The Donga-Dasari (servant of the god) are mendicants of the Vaishnavite sect. Like most of the mendicant brotherhood, they are branded on the shoulders with Vaishnavite symbols. In former times the Donga-Dasaris strengthened their numbers by kidnapping children of other castes. Even now anyone can become a Donga-Dasari, though few would care to do so. Sometimes Mohammedan scoundrels join the caste. The new member must bathe in oil and have his tongue burned with a heated margosa twig before he is acquainted with the secrets of the caste.

Hanuman is their chief deity, and vows are made before him and sheep and fowls are offered in sacrifice. It is necessary to know his wish in the matter before a thieving expedition can start. To ascertain the god's wish, a turban is placed on the head of a sacrificed sheep. If it falls off on the right side the expedition may proceed, but if it falls on the left the gang returns home to await the god's more favourable mood.

An entire family starts out on the housebreaking excursions. The children are taught the proper technique of thieving when they are five or six years old. The mother takes the boy or girl to the nearest bazaar, and points out something she wants the child to steal. If he fails he is soundly thrashed, and while stroke after stroke falls on his back, he must keep repeating that he knows nothing about what his mother asked him to do. This is considered the proper reply to make to the police when he is caught in some crime and beaten by them.

When the Donga-Dasaris are apprehended by the police, they give false names and false castes. They have a cipher language which they use among themselves. The women are very loose morally, but if they go astray with a Brahman it is considered quite an honour.

### NAYADI

The Nayadi is the lowest of the Hindu castes. Its members eat monkeys, mongooses, lizards, and crocodiles ; but abstain from eating beef. These people pollute at a considerable

distance. Even a bridge across a wide river is not always sufficiently long to remove their evil emanations, wherefore they are obliged often to go far out of their way, and may have to wander through paddy fields up to their knees in mud. This is one of the castes which put the leaf on the road to indicate their proximity. A Nayadi will follow one for hours at a respectful distance, howling for alms. If anything is thrown on his leaf, he will snatch it up and disappear like some frightened animal. He pollutes a Brahman at a distance of three hundred feet.

The members of the Nayadi caste live in isolated mud huts on the very edge of streams, or tucked away on hill-tops. Their occupation consists of ploughing, sowing, and weeding for other people. Occasionally they collect wild honey, which they sell for pieces of copper or in exchange for toddy. They make rope from the bark of the Bauhinia tree, and sometimes they fashion crude nets from the same material. On the occasion of Vishnu's festival they must present ropes to members of the higher castes living near their settlements, and for these they receive rice. When persons of higher castes are sick, they make an offering to the Nayadi in the name of Yama (the god of death). The Nayadi, upon receipt of the gift, prays for the life of the sick one.

When a Nayadi woman is pregnant, she must be fed with the flesh of the squirrel or monkey in the sixth month. During the seventh month the ceremony to remove the influence of the evil eye is made over her. If this is not done, abortion caused by the evil eye would occur. To further propitiate the evil eye, a magic thread is tied round her neck and the gods of her ancestors are invoked for a safe delivery. Throughout the confinement she retires to a hut which is set apart for birth. She remains under pollution for ten days, during which time her husband must not see her. On the news of her labour being brought to him, the husband shaves and washes his own abdomen. Any malformation in the child is put down to some fault in the ceremony to remove the evil eye.

When a child is a month old, a ceremony takes place at which it is named. The ear-boring ceremony occurs on the child attaining five years of age. The little girls have the lobes of their ears distorted with a piece of wood, and the little boys with a piece of brass.

When a girl of this caste reaches puberty, she is taken to a tank and, after certain of her women relations have circled round her trailing leafy branches, she bathes. She must not touch any utensil during her initiation, and must not touch her body with her hands. If her skin itches, she must scratch it with a stick.

The Nayadi girl has no idea whom she is to marry, and the man also is in ignorance of the identity of the girl to whom he is making advances. An unknown girl is put into a hut made of leaves, and all the young men of marriageable age poke sticks through the sides. After her father has chanted a *mantram*, the girl reaches for one of the sticks, and the man whose stick she has chosen becomes her husband. Following a feast, the marriage is consummated. If the mother of the girl has been divorced from her husband, she attends the wedding only upon receiving an invitation from her daughter. While she is at the ceremony she avoids her former husband, and etiquette demands that she does not look at him.

One of the superstitions of this caste is that an adulterer is liable to be torn to pieces by wild animals. The caste is also given to ancestor worship, and the souls of the departed are sometimes represented by a pile of stones. During worship these stones are sprinkled with the blood of a chicken, and the souls of the ancestors are requested to protect the caste against wild animals and snake-bites.

Nayadi gods are Mallan, Malavazhi, and Parakutti, to whom they offer toddy and the flesh of monkeys and squirrels.

One peculiarity about the caste is its curse, which always has an opposite effect. A very profane curse, for example, in which all one's ancestors are accused of the most degrading immorality, is said to bring good luck.

When the Nayadis are hunting for rats in their holes (rats are part of their diet), they wear a brass ring to protect them from snake-bite. The ring is not very efficacious, however, as many of these people die of snake-poison.

#### BATTURAJAS

Members of a weird caste, calling itself Batturajas, are scattered about the peninsula. These people are really

Mohammedans who pose as Hindus. They are clever scoundrels ; having frequently a knowledge of Sanskrit, usually a knowledge of passing events, and always an intimate acquaintance with thieving, forgery, and tricks for passing off false coinage. They often speak several languages fluently, and are interesting talkers.

They seldom pursue their activities near home, where they might be recognized and punished. They disappear in parties of three or four for months, and on their return divide up the spoils. Each member of the tribe receives something, although naturally the lion's share goes to the men who have taken the risk.

While on the prowl, they have various ways of communicating with each other. One is a cleverly thought-out system of telepathy. Another is by a chain of leaves (broken, and to an outsider very misleading), which is put down in sheltered places and secured by a pebble.

Masquerading as Brahmans secures for them help and shelter in most places. A favourite method of theirs is to go to a rest-house, and substitute their bag of rubbish for the bag of some traveller whose room they enter while the occupant is out. They used to pick up the clothes and jewels of bathers, when the owners were in the tanks, but this little pastime has been curtailed now, as bathers usually leave an attendant to watch their belongings.

Sometimes they enter the houses of the wealthy as butlers or boys, and after they have gained the confidence of the householder, they abscond with all they can carry. A friend of mine was unfortunate to employ one of this caste as chauffeur. The man filled the position for about three months and then disappeared, as my friend expressed it, with everything but the paint on the motor-car.

Occasionally, they may settle down to small trading ; but it is usually when their agility has deserted them, or when " business " is too slack to warrant a trip.



## CHAPTER X

### CASTES. (CULTIVATORS)

#### REDDIS OR KAPUS

**T**HE Reddis (meaning "king"), or Kapus as they are also called, are the largest caste in the Madras Presidency. They number more than two millions. It has been said that, next to the Brahmans, they are the leaders of Hindu society, but this statement, like everything else in India, is disputed by other castes. The Kapus are cultivators and farmers, and considerable landowners in the Telugu districts. They spend their money on land and on gold ornaments for their women. Their houses are substantially built, and they are usually well-dressed. Their diet is chiefly vegetarian.

Their history wades through any number of legends and contradictory statements. It is generally believed that they were a powerful Dravidian tribe in the early centuries of the Christian era, for their presence has left traces in almost every part of India. They come noticeably into history after the captivity of Pratapa Rudra of Warrangal by the Mohammedan emperor Ghiyas-ud-din Toghluq, in A.D. 1323.

Theirs was the Kongu kingdom, which continued under their own kings until it was conquered by the Chola kings of Tanjore, and annexed to their dominions. The Mackenzie collection of manuscripts mentions the reigns of twenty-eight Kongu kings. These kings represented two dynasties, namely the solar and the ganga. In the early days they occupied a southern situation. They disappear from the south at the end of the second century A.D.

Their next appearance seems to be in the northern Dekkan, amongst the kingdoms of the Chalukyas in the fourth century A.D. Their own chronicles place them in the solar race, and claim descent for them through the second son of Rama, the hero of the solar epic of the Hindus. Other chronicles have

disputed this claim, and trace their descent through the Yadava tribe of the lunar race.

The first appearance in the south of the Chalukyas, who absorbed the Kapus, is said to have been in the fifth century A.D. The Kanarese districts of the Bombay Presidency were then held by them, except for periods of interruption, caused by the invasion of the Pallavas kings, and their sway over this part of the country continued until the eighth century A.D.

From that until the present day their history opens and shuts like day and night. At times the light shines on it, and it can be traced. At other times it is so vague as to be obscured under legendary distortions. Even the god of Krishna is said to help them in battle and furnishes eight hundred elephants for their army. The caste, now called Kapu or Reddi, has a saying that a Kapu can enumerate all the varieties of rice, but that it is impossible for him to recite the names of his caste divisions.

One of the divisions, which has a semi-Brahmanical descent, came into existence through a Brahman girl named Yerlamma and a man of the Kapu caste. Yerlamma, because she was not married by her parents in childhood, was turned out of her caste. The Kapu, out of pity, married her, and she bore him many children who were the ancestors of the Yerlam Kapu division.

In consequence of the harsh treatment of Yerlamma by her caste, her descendants hate the Brahmans and look down upon them, affecting to be superior. They do not employ Brahman priests at their marriages, and at their weddings there is no *homan* (sacred fire) ceremony. They simply ascertain a fortunate day, by consulting an astrologer, and get an old woman to tie the marriage badge on the bride's neck. After the wedding a feast is given to members of their own division.

The Yerlam Kapus refuse to eat with any but their own castemen; indeed, so exclusive are they, they even object to chewing betel-nut with members of other castes. In this they outdo the Brahmans, who will consent to take betel from a Sudra if a little curd is mixed with it.

Another division formerly lived in Ayodhya, where the discovery of a scheme to rob the king caused the hurried departure of Belthi Reddi, together with one of his thirteen wives and seventy-seven of his children.

In escaping from Ayodhya, the worthy Belthi Reddi and his family had to cross the Silanadi River, in passing through which anyone would become petrified. They had, therefore, to go to a place called Dhonakonda and worship Ganga, the goddess of the Ganges, who then helped the party to cross the river in safety. On the other side Belthi Reddi and his family came to the Mallikarjuna temple, where they stayed to help the Jangams with the temple duties. Later, the Jangams having to leave for a while, they consigned the temple to the temporary care of the Kapus. When they returned, however, Belthi Reddi refused to hand over his charge. It was decided, then, that whoever could go to Nagolokam, the home of the snakes, and bring back Naga Malligai, the jasmine flower of snake land, would be considered the rightful owner of the temple. The Jangams, because they were skilled in the art of transformation, decided to go, and quitting their mortal bodies, went in spirit guise in search of the flower. While they were away the Kapus burnt their bodies, and when the spirits returned they had nowhere to enter. The god of the temple, with that, became very angry, and turned the Jangams into crows that they might attack the Kapus. Pursued by the crows, the Kapus fled to the country of Oraganti Pratapa Rudra, and the king of this country forcing the crows to cease their torment, the Kapus settled down there as cultivators.

With the Kapus, if a casteman abandons his wife she may go and live with his brother. Widows live with men, encouraged by the hope of marriage in the event of pregnancy. In some out-of-the-way villages castemen are actually hired to go through the form of marriage with a pregnant widow, to relieve her from the penalty of excommunication. The man remains with her for a few days, playing the part of husband, and then he leaves in accordance with his contract. Sometimes one wonders if they are wrong in the north to forbid widows having anything to do with men, by forcing them into a sort of retirement.

The caste goddess of the Kapus, whose temple is in Perambalur, is worshipped by all divisions of the caste. A division called Pongalas worship the goddess with some gruesome rites, one of which is the drinking of goats' blood before the idol. The women do reverence to the goddess at night by exposing their persons before it.

## BANTS

The Bants are an out-of-door people, and while they have not availed themselves to any great extent of Western education, they have adapted many of the Western games and amusements. Buffalo racing, differing though it does from horse racing, allows betting and the same share of excitement. Cock-fighting, however, is the popular sport, and fights go on every day on an elaborate scale.

Almost every Bant raises large numbers of cocks, and at the fights he displays his bird with great pride. The sport takes place in the jungle, where the birds are tethered to the bushes until the contest begins. Water and rice are poured over the heads of the combatants before the start, to propitiate a forest demon (*bhut*). If the blood from the wound drops on the ground the *bhut* is appeased, as it nourishes his forest. During the struggle the tail feathers of a wounded bird are lifted, and its rectum is fanned with a palm leaf to revive it. The owner of the victorious bird receives the dead bird also. Only men attend the fights.

Buffalos are raced at the harvest festival before the second sowing of crops, usually in October or November. Before the race there is a devil-dance, at which the devils are propitiated. A be-feathered and be-decked devil-dancer gallops round the fields on something resembling a child's hobby-horse. A few musicians follow him, splashing the mud as they go. At one meeting, which took place near Calicut, one of the devil-dancers had a huge generative organ attached to his costume. The phallus was stuffed with cotton and tipped with red, and under it hung enormous testes, made of pink cotton and worked with blue to represent veins.

The buffalos have pieces of thin plank attached to them with ropes, and on which the driver, usually a young boy, stands. The animals run in pairs, close together. The field must be very wet paddy, as the race is judged by the height of the splashing mud. There is no proper means of measurement, but the excited crowd of onlookers, after much argument, decides which buffalo has executed the greater spatter. During the race two banners, one for each buffalo, are stuck in the mud at the end of the field. After the event, the winning animal is led away, a boy following with the victorious

buffalo's banner. A procession trails after the boy, cheering the owner of the buffalo and scattering the mud.

At the end of the race, the devil-dancing begins again. This time some dancer impersonates the devil, and he is showered with rice and offered toddy. Being a well-mannered devil, he never refuses the latter offering, and is willing to be propitiated so long as he can stand up. It is believed that, were the demon not propitiated, the crops would be a failure. Demons flit in and out of legends of each state, and all of them must be propitiated. Mysore received its name from Maheshasura, the buffalo-headed giant who demands his yearly offerings and sacrifices.

Contrary to the habits of our jockeys, in India sleep and rest before a race are not deemed necessary to its success. The boys who race the buffalos sit up the night before, singing songs and repeating the name of the demon. This preparation is called "sitting under the dew."

If the owners of the buffalos can afford to keep the animals for racing, they never permit them to plough. All the fines the Bants must pay during the year are expended at the buffalo festivals and at temple celebrations, and there is little punishment in the Bant code to-day, apart from the levelling of such payments. At their New Year's festival the Bants become so excited with sport and toddy they frequently beat each other with their clubs in the sheer joy of living. No one would dream of taking this little pleasantry in any but the spirit in which it is meant. In earlier days criminals were stripped and made to stand in the sun, with thousands of large red ants crawling over their bodies.

Although marriage, in its true meaning, does not exist with the Bants, there is an unwritten law which is usually observed. Divorce is permitted, but it is not considered respectable and is very infrequent. The mock marriage of the Nairs is unknown in the Bant caste. Inheritance is through the female line, and the boy belongs to his mother and not to his father. Marriages in the same division of the caste are considered incestuous, and because of consanguinity are prohibited.

Boys and girls are married after they have reached maturity. There are two forms of marriage: one for widows and widowers, and one for virgins and bachelors. The

ceremony may be performed at either the house of the bride or of the bridegroom, whichever is more convenient. If a widow becomes pregnant, she must marry or she is outcasted.

The Bants burn their dead, with the exception of children under nine and persons who have died of leprosy or smallpox. Such persons are buried. There is a belief held by most Indians that the bodies of lepers never decay, but remain for ever in the same condition in which they are put into the ground. Some castes believe misfortune will follow if the body of a leper is burned. The funeral pyre of the Bant must consist largely of mango wood. The corpse, on its way to the burning-ground, is put down by a pot of fire and its clothes are distributed to the persons who have prepared it for burning.

Sometimes after the funeral the friends and relatives return to the burning-ground. On the spot where the corpse was consumed, the barber, the carpenter, and the washerman build a structure of an uneven number of ties supported by an uneven number of posts. This structure is decorated with bananas, lotus buds, mango leaves, and cloth. It remains until blown down by the wind, or carried away piecemeal by unknown marauders.

After the funeral the possessions of the deceased are spread on a cloth inside the house. Tumeric and cow-dung are suspended by a string from the ceiling above the cloth, about which the family assembles. The barber then breaks a coconut, and sprinkles the water it contains over the members of the family. The following day food is placed on the cloth, beside the possessions of the deceased. The cloth is renewed each year, and the possessions of the deceased remain on it until there is another death in the family.

#### KALLANS

The Kallans of Madura are a most vindictive and quarrelsome people. They would kill anyone, excepting a Brahman, without compunction, but for the restraining influence of the law. They are so dishonest that any merchandise passing through their hands is usually tampered with. The very word *kallan*, which is applied to their caste, is used to designate a thief.

Their chief idea of beauty is to bore their ears, and cause

the lobe to hang down as far as possible by the weights fastened in the opening. If ear lobes reach the shoulders, they have achieved beauty. The women used to swear by their ears, and so violent was their temper that if anyone accused them of falsehood they would pull the lobe from their ear and fling it in the face of their accuser. Not very long ago it was necessary to have a guide to conduct travellers through their domain. This guide was a young Kallan girl, who expected to be well compensated for her services.

Certain scholars say that the Kallans are a renegade division of the Kurumbas, who took to thieving when soldiering was no longer required of them. Record has it that the horses of Clive and Stringer Lawrence were stolen by Kallans. According to tradition Vizia Ragoonada Saitooputty was so terrified of the Kallans during his reign that he slept on a bed which was suspended from the roof on heavy iron chains (history neglects to say how he got in and out of bed). The story goes that one night a Kallan slipped down one of the chains and stole the royal jewels. On the king promising a grant of land to anyone who would restore the jewels, the Kallan promptly surrendered himself and claimed the reward. The king gave him the land, but soon after ordered his execution.

In certain districts, especially round Tanjore, the Kallans have settled down to agriculture. It is said that the industry which has given them such a sense of security has overcome any inclination to follow their old pursuits. In this district many have come under the influence of the Brahmans, and employ Brahman priests at their weddings. In spite of this apparent Kallan reformation, however, cattle thieving is still very popular.

Stolen cattle are taken some little distance from their owners, and concealed in a shed by someone in league with the thief. The owners, believing that their cattle have wandered, offer a reward. The cattle are then brought back and the reward accepted, unless the beasts are of a special breed and could be sold outside of the district for a good price. If the thief is reported to the police, no stolen animal thereafter ever finds its way back to its owner.

Some years ago the Government, trying to be very canny, put the Kallans under the *kaval* system. They received fees,

and in certain cases rent-free land, in return for a promise to protect the village against theft and to restore the value of anything lost. The result was a carefully thought-out system of blackmail, levied on all and sundry, and an anti-Kallan movement had to be started, to save the village from its protectors.

When the Kallans are accused of theft, they will defend themselves by saying that everybody steals; the officials by accepting bribes, the lawyers by arranging animosities, and the merchants by watering their stock.

This caste performs circumcision. It is uncertain how this practice came into being, but it is believed that it originated from Mohammedan influence. When a youth is ready for the ceremony, he is borne on the shoulders of his maternal uncle to some secluded place outside the village. The operation is performed by the barber. The boy is presented with a new *dhotie* and, if he wishes, he can claim his cousin in marriage. If he marries his cousin then his aunt, the girl's mother, must pay the cost of the circumcision. By the same token, the uncle must pay the costs of the puberty ceremony when his niece attains maturity, if he desires her to be the bride of his son.

The Kallan girl often chooses her husband for valour. The horns of the fiercest bull are festooned with flowers, and the animal is turned loose amidst the frightful din of wild music and tom-toms. Excited by the noise and the onlookers, the bull charges about wildly, snorting and bellowing. The would-be bridegroom must recover the flowers from the bull's horns, and it is considered a very great disgrace to be injured in so doing.

In former days all weddings were preceded by bull-fights. The girls who were to be married stood on a balcony overlooking the enclosure, and watched their sweethearts give an account of themselves. The men were dressed in garlands of red and purple flowers, and before the contest prayed to the gods whose images were placed under the trees. The drums were beaten until the animals were infuriated, when at a given signal the men leaped into the enclosure and tried to seize the bulls, each youth selecting the bull whose colours belonged to his sweetheart. Many an unfortunate youth would be gored, and others, although wounded and bleeding,



would essay again and again to spring on to the beasts' backs and bring them to the ground. The men who acted as judges, when they had gloated sufficiently over the ghastly spectacle, announced that the fight was over. The victors afterwards met their brides-elect in another enclosure, which had been prepared for dancing. Often girls had to attend several fights before their chosen ones (there were different men on each occasion) came out alive.

In the opinion of the Kallans the perfect alliance is between a man and his first cousin on his father's side. Disparity in ages is considered of no consequence. A boy of fifteen should marry such a cousin, if she happens to be thirty or forty, and if he has no cousin he should marry his aunt. When a wedding has taken place, the bridegroom's sister goes to the bride's house and takes the bride home with her to a feast that has been prepared. For the celebration sheep will have been roasted and a goodly supply of toddy bought. When everyone is intoxicated, the bride and the bridegroom go to their own house.

During the first year of their marriage the bride's mother is supposed to present the pair with rice and chickens, pots, cocoanuts, and cloth, as often as she can afford the gifts. It used to be the custom for the bride and bridegroom to stand side by side during the marriage ceremony, and to sell all the wedding presents to the assembled guests, the money brought by the sale becoming the bride's wedding portion.

Infant marriage is permitted amongst the Kallans, but it is not popular because it entails a present which must be given by the parents of the bride to the contracting pair until after the first year of the conjugal state. In adult marriage the time is shortened, and consequently the expenditure is less.

For the betrothal ceremony the consent of the maternal uncle is necessary.

A pregnant woman, during the seventh month of pregnancy, stands before her sister-in-law with bent head, while the sister-in-law pours the milk of a cocoanut down her, the pregnant woman's, back. Sometimes patterns are traced on her back with tumeric paste before the liquid is poured. On the same date the husband decorates a grindstone with paste tracings, invokes a blessing on his wife, and prays that she may have a male child as strong as the stone. When a child

is born, the entire family is under pollution for thirty days, during which time entrance into a temple is forbidden.

Divorce is easily obtained. No woman stays with her husband if she has tired of him (regardless of the number of children she has), provided she can pay him back the marriage expenses. A departing wife leaves her children with her husband. Widows are permitted to remarry, and they may enter the temple and attend religious ceremonies after the second marriage.

The Kallans are normally Sivaïtes, but in reality they are devil worshippers. On festive and special occasions they put the sacred ashes on their foreheads. They are given to witchcraft, and pay strict attention to omens. Before an undertaking they place one red and one white flower in front of their idols, the white bloom signifying success. A child is asked to pick up one of the flowers, and if the red one is chosen the undertaking is abandoned for the time. The Kallans propitiate demons, and make animal sacrifices to river deities. Their local gods are carried through the streets on the sacred vehicle at the car festival, and their god, Alagar-swami, exhibits the long ears characteristic of the caste.

It is said that if the men of this caste are successful on a marauding expedition, they put some of their ill-gotten gain before the god in the local shrine. The banks of the river Vaiga swarm with Kallans at their great annual festival, when the god Alagar-swami is dragged through the streets. No blood is spilled as Alagar-swami is a vegetarian, but lack of sanguine offering is due more to Brahman influence than to Alagar-swami's vegetarian propensities.

These people used to steal the gold coins which were buried under the gods of other castes. Present watchfulness in the temples, however, has curtailed this form of desecration.

If the road to a thieving expedition passes a strange deity, the Kallans often enter the temple and take the deity into their confidence. They promise him a reward, or a sacrifice, if he does not interfere with the adventure. Such is the power of superstition, they always keep their word, and frequently return to the god at night after they have pillaged some village. The priest of the temple accompanies them, and before the offering is made the god tells them, through the medium of his priest, how they behaved at the robbery. This,

incidentally, is not difficult, as any Brahman priest has sufficient imagination to describe a village robbery. The god then expresses his willingness to accept the gift, which very often is money or rice. Sometimes the offering is a goat, and as an animal must shiver when water is poured over it to be fit for sacrifice, the priest sees that no scrawny underfed specimen is presented. If the Kallans hesitate about exchanging a thin animal for one more generously covered, the god will make some unpleasant remark about the plundering expedition. This usually has the desired effect, and a better-looking animal is hastily brought.

The Kallans believe that certain trees are occupied by devils, and under such trees they make offerings to the demon inhabitants. Rice and milk are left for the devils at night, and a little fire is lighted in order that they can see the offerings. To-day, if such a tree grows in the jungle, and is consequently off the beaten path, a sheep or a goat is sacrificed and its blood spilled at the roots. When an animal is offered, the devil will come out of the tree and enter the body of the worshipper, who becomes the devil's mouthpiece and predicts what is going to happen in the near future. When the spirit of darkness has had his say, he returns to his tree and the worshipper recovers his senses.

Disputes and petty crimes occurring in the caste are usually settled by some member in authority. This dignitary frequently is one who, because he has acquired more money than any of the others, has won the respect of his people. Fines he inflicts are credited to the caste fund, and as this fund must be augmented the attentions of the police are not solicited.

#### BATTADA

If a Battada widow does not marry her husband's brother, the man she marries must present the brother-in-law with a sheep, a goat, or some money. If a Battada woman divorces her husband to marry another man, the man she marries must arrange a feast to which the entire caste is invited, the divorced husband included.

#### KARUMPURATHTHALS

The Karumpuraththals are a caste of Karanese-speaking farmers, found chiefly in Madura and Tinnevely. The caste

has two divisions ; one permitting widows to remarry, and the other allowing women to divorce and remarry until they have had three husbands.

For the following story about the Karumpuraththals I am indebted to C. Rayavadana Rao. According to a tradition which is current among them, they migrated from their original home in search of new grazing ground for their cattle. The herd, which they brought with them, still lives in its descendants in the valley, and the animals themselves are small and active, well known for their trotting powers. They are about one hundred and fifty strong, and are called *devaru avu* in Kanarese, and *thambiran madu* in Tamil, both meaning "the sacred herd."

The cows are never milked, and their calves, when they grow up, are not used for any purpose except breeding. When the cattle die, they are buried deep in the ground and not handed over to Chakkiliyans (leather workers). One of the bulls goes by the name of *pattada avu* (the king bull), and is selected by a quaint ceremony. On an auspicious day the castemen assemble, and offer incense, camphor, cocoanuts, plantains, and betel to the herd. Meanwhile, a bundle of sugar-cane is placed in front of the animals, and the spectators eagerly watch to see which of the bulls will reach it first. The beast which does so is caught, daubed with tumeric and decorated with flowers. He is styled Nanda Gopala or Venu-gopalaswami, after Krishna, the divine cattle-grazer, and is an object of adoration by the caste. To meet the expenses of the ceremony, which amounts to about two hundred rupees, a subscription is raised among the people.

The king bull has a special attendant or driver, whose duties are to graze and worship his charge, and who is taken from the Maragala section of the Endar sub-division of the caste. When the attendant dies, a successor is appointed in the following manner. Before the assembled castemen, *puja* (worship) is offered to the sacred herd, and a young boy, "upon whom the god comes," points out a man from among the Maragalas. The chosen driver enjoys the *inams*,<sup>1</sup> and is the custodian of the jewels presented to the king bull in former days, and of the copper plates whereon grants made in the name of the herd are engraved. Most of the plates

<sup>1</sup> Perquisites.

record grants from unknown kings. One, Ponnum Pandyan, a king of Gudalur, is recorded as having made grants of land and other presents to the bull, but otherwise the names of the years are recorded.

Before the annual migration of the cattle to the hills during the summer, a ceremony is carried out to determine whether the king bull is in favour of going. Two plates, one containing milk and the other sugar, are placed before the herd, and unless, or until, the bull has come up to them and gone back the migration does not take place. The driver, or someone deputed to represent him, accompanies the herd, together with most of the cattle from the neighbouring villages. The driver is said to carry a pot of freshly-drawn milk into a shrine before starting, and on the day on which the return journey to the valley is commenced, the pot is opened and the milk is supposed to be found in a hardened state. A slice of it is cut off, and given to each person who went with the herd to the hills. It is believed that the milk would not remain in good condition if the sacred herd had been in any way injuriously affected by its sojourn.

The sacred herd is recruited by certain calves dedicated as members by people of other castes in the neighbourhood of the valley. These calves, born on the first of the month *Thai* (January-February), are dedicated to the god Nandagopala, and are known as *sanni pasuva*. They are branded on the legs or buttocks, and their ears are slightly torn. They are not used for ploughing or milking, and cannot be sold. Although they are added to the sacred herd, the male calves among them are kept distinct from the male calves of the original.

Many miracles are attributed to the successive king bulls. During a fight between the Tottiyans and the Kappiliyans at Dindigul, a king bull left on the rock the permanent print of his hoof, which is still believed to be visible. Again, at a subsequent quarrel between the same castes, at Dombercheri, a king bull made the sun turn back in its course, and the shadow is still pointed out under a tamarind tree where arbitration finally took place. Because of the assistance rendered by the bull on that occasion, the Maragalas will not use the wood of the tamarind or vela tree to which the bull was tied, either for fuel or building.

The Karumpurathtals, not long ago, raised eleven thousand rupees by taxing all members of the caste for three years, and expended that sum in building roomy quarters at Kambam for the sacred herd. Their chief grievance is that the same grazing fees are levied on their animals as on more ordinary cattle, which they assert is equivalent to treating gods as the equals of men. In this caste oaths are taken within the enclosure of the sacred herd.

#### OKKILIYIANS

The Okkiliyians vary the marriage custom by permitting the father of the bridegroom to cohabit with his daughter-in-law when the bridegroom is younger than the bride, and when he is feeble. The marriage ceremony is the occasion for a free-fight. Guests may hurl filthy language at each other, or, if something more substantial is desired, missiles of mud. Divorce is permitted, and divorcees may marry and re-divorce as many times as they wish.

#### KUNNUVANS

The Kunnuvans, agricultural people of the Madura district, have an interesting ceremony where a man has a daughter but no son. The girl cannot be demanded by the uncle or his son, as is usually the case in this caste, but must be married to one of the door-posts of her father's house. A silver bangle is put on her wrist, instead of the usual *tali* on her neck, and she is then allowed to cohabit with any man she chooses, providing he is of her own caste. Her earnings are given to her parents, and if she has a son he inherits her father's property.

Divorce is very easily obtained. The petitioner (always the man, as the woman is so loose morally she never troubles to procure a divorce) pays the amount of the bride price, and the children go to the father. Members of this caste remarry with such frequency that they have become the butt of many filthy jokes in their district.

As in some Western countries, incompatibility of temper is a sufficient ground for divorce. At any time a husband can get rid of his wife by taking her, together with a pair of bullocks, to the home of her parents. If a wife tires of her partner she

leaves him her gold jewels (silver trinkets are never parted with) and departs. She then, according to her pleasure, either returns to her parents or goes to live with another man.

Her children must all be made over to her husband. If she is pregnant when she leaves, the child, after the suckling age, must be sent to the husband. The husband usually pays the expense of rearing the child up to the time it is sent to him.

A woman may "marry" any number of men in rapid succession, or she may bestow her favours on any man of her caste. The men may indulge in polygamy to any extent. A group of wives is a good investment, and the wealthier Kunnuvans keep as many women as they can. The women are very useful, especially for agricultural purposes.

This caste worships Siva.

#### GOLLAS

The Gollas, a pastoral caste of Telugus, claim descent from the god Krishna, whose flute-playing and sportings with women play a prominent part in Hindu mythology. Many Gollas now engage in farming, although their hereditary occupation was herding sheep and cattle and selling milk, and a few of them have entered Government service. They are respectable and honest, and, while poor, can be trusted to pack and lift bags of money in district treasuries. The Brahmans will consent to take buttermilk from them, because they tend and worship the sacred cow. When a member of the caste is reduced to poverty, the others stand by and do what they can to re-establish the unfortunate one, and often give him something which he can sell.

In the Vizagapatam district tales are still recounted of a line of Golla chieftains who built forts, of which traces still remain. On the Telugu new year the Gollas go round their villages, reciting the exploits of the ancient chieftains and exhibiting paintings of their battles. Local tradition says that ruins of old forts at Vajragada were once the strongholds of Golla kings.

A tale is told of the Gollas kidnapping a daughter of the ruler of Madgole, and holding her for a month against attacks. Finally one of their own women betrayed them, by showing the enemy how to cut off their water supply. Thereupon

they slew their women, and fought the enemy until the last of their men fell.

When a child is born, the mother remains in a shed outside the village. She must bring forth the infant unaided, unless she can persuade a midwife of some other caste to assist her. If any member of the caste touches her for thirty days after the child is born, he is outcasted. Food is placed on the ground near the shed, which the woman carries inside and eats. Once it was customary for her to move her temporary shelter a little nearer to her village every week, until at last she was at home and permitted to enter her husband's house.

Certain of the Gollas, like members of all the other castes, have forsaken some of their primitive habits, and where superstition is not too strong they engage a midwife and see that the woman has proper care while she is under pollution. These people eat flesh and drink toddy. Their widows are not allowed to remarry, and a wife cannot be divorced unless adultery is proved.

The wife of the eldest son in every family is not supposed to clean herself with water after answering the call of nature. If she does so, the cattle will not prosper.



## CHAPTER XI

### CASTES. (POTTERS)

#### ODDE

**T**HE Odde is a potters' caste, and their district is Canara. They make pots by moulding mud on the primitive potter's wheel, turning the wheel with a stick. They worship at *bhuthasthanas* (devil shrines), and their priests are dissolute and dirty scoundrels. This caste worships devils or gods, whichever deity is nearer their villages.

Their marriage rites are completed in a day. The contracting fathers exchange betel-nut, and the bridegroom presents the bride's family with a ring. At the ceremony a bench is placed within the *pandal* (constructed of the branches of trees, grass, and bamboo, and decorated with bunches of bananas and flowers), on which clothes, brought by the washerman caste, have been spread. The bridegroom is taken to the *pandal* by the bride's brother, and after circling the bench three times he squats on the ground. Women follow him, carrying lighted lamps, rice and fruit. The lamps are hung on twigs projecting from the *pandal*, and the other articles are placed on the ground. The women throw rice, a few grains at a time, over the head of the bridegroom, which is afterwards shaved by the barber with milk instead of water. A female barber attends to the bride, who has not yet left the house. The bride is shaved on the pelvis and under the arms; an Indian woman, no matter which her caste may be, disliking to have hair on her body. Next, the bride is dressed in a new *sari* and taken to the *pandal*, where she squats beside the bridegroom and they hold hands. The ceremony is consummated by the bride's uncle pouring water, in which cow-dung has been mixed, over the couple.

This caste has an interesting pregnancy rite. The pregnant woman is presented with two chickens by her maternal uncle.

The fowls receive great care, and if they lay abundantly the woman will be very prolific.

When an Odde girl reaches puberty, she is confined in a special hut with a piece of metal, some margosa leaves, and a few sticks. These are to keep the evil spirits from entering the hut. The girl may eat eggs but no flesh, and on the seventh day she is given chicken broth which has been mixed with toddy. This is supposed to increase the strength of her generative organs. The chicken which is used for the broth must be black, and it must have laid eggs for the first time. After the period of menstrual pollution, the girl returns home and the hut is burned down.

The Odde death ceremony has its special variations. After the burial an effigy of the departed is made out of mud, and is offered cooked rice and fruits.

A friend living near Coimbatore told me of witnessing a cure for snake-bite made by one of the witch-doctors of this caste. A boy, who had been digging round the root of a tree with his fingers, was bitten by a cobra, and my friend saw the cobra clinging to the boy's hand. Almost at once the arm became numb, which is the ghastly result of cobra poison. The witch-doctor appeared as if by magic, fetched no doubt by a member of the caste, and proceeded to throw a brown powder on the spot where the snake's fangs had fastened. He then took a small stick, which evidently he had brought with him, stuck it first in the boy's mouth and then in his own, and began to draw it up and down the boy's back. All the while he uttered strange guttural sounds, and the boy's arm gradually became sensitive and he began to move his fingers. For several minutes the patient's fingers continued to move, while the witch-doctor moved the stick up and down his back. To terminate the performance, the witch-doctor poured water over the injured hand, the brown powder had evidently been absorbed by the incision, for the water came away quite clear. The boy trotted off as if nothing had happened to him.

My friend tried to question the *sadhu*, but was able to learn nothing. The man simply mumbled something about sap ascending in the trees as the moon waxed, and descending while it waned. These primitive people are often marvellous herbalists, but their knowledge is so mixed up with magic that it is difficult to dissociate the medicinal value of their roots

from the rites which accompany it. As the rite means more to them than the medicine, nothing is ever gleaned from them.

### KUMMARA

The Kummara caste is said to have a left-handed descent from the Brahman. The Brahman inheritance came to them through their great progenitor, who believed in missing no opportunity. This learned ancestor discovered, by studying his horoscope, that on a certain day he could beget mighty offspring, and at once he started for the house of a woman whom he had selected for the great honour. But floods detained him, and he was obliged to seek shelter at the house of a potter. The auspicious moment arriving while he was in the potter's house, the potter's daughter became the mother of the great offspring. At a very early age the child, which was a boy (it is always a boy in Hindu legend), showed a genius for fashioning pottery. Then, when Vikramarka invaded south India he ordered the people to supply him with pots for his army, and the people applied to this boy. He infused life into the clay figures on the pots, and these figures defeated the enemy. The country, Mysore, fell into the hands of Vikramarka, and the boy finally became a ruler of the land.

This is the story the Kummara potters tell, to explain their relationship to the early Mysore Rajas. The pretty tale does not help them much, however, as they are considered to be of low rank among the Sudras.

This caste has tried its hand at many kinds of pottery under the direction of various foreigners, and the only way their work differs from that of other potters is in its fragile appearance. Like all pottery made in India, it has no beauty.

## CHAPTER XII

### CASTES. (TODDY DRAWERS)

#### BILLAVAS

**T**HE Billava, the caste of toddy drawers, has more members than any southern caste. Its duties consist of drawing toddy (the sap of the palm trees), after the various superstitions accompanying this work have been observed. For example, there is but one correct way to hold the knife when tapping a tree, or chopping off a cocoanut. Again, if a palm tree is beaten with a tiger's bone, it goes a long way towards increasing the yield of toddy. While only certain stones should be used to hone the knives, and then only at auspicious times.

Toddy drawers are supposed to have knowledge of medicine and magic, and for the following reason.

A certain poor woman once had two sons who were taken under the care of a holy man. The holy man taught them magic and medicine, but extracted a promise that in return for his teaching they would not marry. Finally the holy man was obliged to leave the sons for a year, and while he was away they could not resist the wiles of two maidens who served them. They married the girls, and the news of their marriage was heard by the holy man in a dream. He returned, but waited on the far side of the river while his two disciples attempted to wade across to him. His idea was to watch them drown before his eyes, but when they were half-way across, and sinking rapidly into the quicksands on the river-bed, the holy one relented. He threw them an armful of books, on which they managed to retrace their steps. These books were treatises on medicine and magic, and the two men applied themselves to the study of them for the rest of their lives. They then passed on the knowledge to their descendants, the toddy drawers.

It is not an unusual thing for a toddy drawer to offer to

invoke a *bhut* to help him to cure the disease of some member of his caste.

If death occurs on an inauspicious day, a ceremony to drive away the ghost is performed. The doors are closed, ashes are spread on the floor, and someone climbs up and sprinkles the roof with cow's urine. The doors are then opened, and the ashes are examined for footprints of the ghost. If there are no marks, it means that the ghost is still lurking about the house, and a magician is called in to drive it out.

Girls who die unmarried are supposed to haunt the house. The only way to propitiate such a ghost is by marriage. The parents of the dead girl search for a house where a boy has died, and from it take a piece of money and two spoons. The spoons, with the money enclosed in them, are then tied to the ceiling of the girl's house, and this represents the betrothal ceremony. Next, a day is chosen for the marriage, and on that day two figures are drawn on the floor with tumeric paste. The hands of the figures lie one on the other, and some money, a ring and a nose screw are placed on the hands and water is poured over them. After this ceremony the ghost of the girl departs.

The toddy drawers worship Siva, but their village temples seldom contain his image or even one of the hideous pictures of this deity. A plate of silver, holding a tiny figure of a human being, stands on their shrines. On one side of this plate are two clay figures; on the other side, another figure on horseback. The figures vary in different villages. In some temples, where unscen demons are supposed to sing the devil-songs, nothing is found but a few rope beds.

If a toddy drawer is able to become possessed at the demon festivals, he wears a gold bangle on his wrists, to distinguish him from less fortunate members of his caste.

## CHAPTER XIII

### CASTES. (ARTISANS)

#### KOTAS

ONE often wonders why Indian art is so crude ; why statues of women have masculine proportions, and those of men are endowed with the development and curves of the female figure. The reason is that Indian artists are from the lower castes.

Until very recently no high-caste person would think of working in any of the arts, and while education has done something to change this idea, there are many high-caste people who consider it disgraceful to represent the human figure in any shape or form. Such people believe that only deities should be represented, and then only because one must have some object to pray to, until one is so far advanced along the "pathway" that one can "contemplate" the essence of the universe.

Hinduism groups the artists and the artisans in the same class, and looks down upon them equally. The Kotas, a caste which furnishes musicians, goldsmiths and silversmiths, is one of the lowest of the low, and its members are carrion-eaters, delighting in a cattle epidemic which so abundantly supplies them with food. They will hack pieces from the dead carcasses of a bullock, or a buffalo, found rotting beside the road, and if they can manage it they will carry off the entire carcase. They frequently carry home a dead rat, which they have found in some stable or go-down.

Kotas actually court venereal disease, and a man who has not suffered from it when round about nineteen years of age is considered a hopeless fool. Unfortunately, in this respect, no boy need go out of his way in India to ingratiate himself with his caste. Again, the Kota men are so fond of drink, they often refuse to leave the toddy shops until they are helped home in a boisterous state of intoxication.

These people are not permitted to milk cows, as their touch would pollute the animals, and they may drink milk only when it is given to them by someone of a higher caste. Matches are also prohibited among them, though they may take fire from the house of some member of a higher caste and are allowed to produce it by friction.

At the time of the annual temple festival the men must not speak to their wives, under fear of pollution, and they must prepare their own food. At sowing times they must live on a vegetable diet, or there will be no harvest, and must speak to their wives only by addressing their conversation to boys who act as spokesmen.

Kotas visit their temples and worship at the time of the full moon. They are not permitted to go near the temples of higher castes, owing to the polluting nature of their being. Their temples are no more than the temporary structures erected to shelter cows from the sun : a few sticks of bamboo stuck in a pile of stones, with a straw thatch stretched over them.

This caste originated from one drop of a god's perspiration. In all the god managed to ooze three drops, bringing three of the hill tribes into existence—the Todas, the Kurumbas, and the Kotas. In spite of the contempt accorded the Kotas by all other castes, it must be admitted that they are excellent artisans, who seem to be able to accomplish whatever they undertake. Not only do they excel in the manufacture of silver and gold, but they make artistic and substantial umbrellas, and many small trinkets requiring skill. They consume quantities of opium, without which they cannot seem to work, and no matter what the law happens to be, or how the sale of opium is watched, they contrive to obtain it.

#### KAMMALAN-CHETTIS

A pretty legend is told to explain the friendship which exists between the Kammalans and the Chettis.

In the ancient town of Kanda, somewhere near Conjeeveram, the Kammalans lived and carried on their work, which no other caste could copy. They were highly-skilled craftsmen, and contrived various inventions to conceal their methods

and the sources of their materials. They respected no ruler, thereby greatly offending the dictators of their day, and the headsman of other castes got together to annihilate them, secreting all the arms they could find for the purpose. However, the fort of the Kammalans was a magnetic one, fashioned entirely of loadstone (one of their inventions), and drew the weapons out of the hands of its attackers before they could use them. The thwarted rulers, therefore, offered a reward to anyone who could invent a way to overcome the difficulty. Finally the prostitutes of a near-by temple engaged to lure the men of the hated caste to destruction, and they sang so sweetly that they succeeded in attracting the men over for intercourse. During an amorous discussion one of the prostitutes succeeded in extracting from a young Kammalan the secret of the fort, and, to conclude the tale, he told her that if the fort was surrounded by straw at night, it could be destroyed by fire. The rulers, upon the information from the temple girl, had this done, and many Kammalans lost their lives. Some escaped by ships, but many were trapped in the ruins, and any who were found endeavouring to escape were summarily beheaded. One woman, however, who was pregnant, was taken out of pity to the home of a Chetti, who told the rulers that she was his daughter.

After these clever artificers were destroyed, great discontent arose in the country, since no one could be found to do their work. The king of a distant province then decided to discover if by chance any member of the Kammalan caste still lived. The king's method was very ingenious. He sent a piece of coral pierced by an opening so fine and tortuous it could not be seen, and promised a great reward to anyone who could draw a thread through the opening. Although thousands attempted the feat, none were successful. At length the child who had been born to the fugitive woman in the house of the Chetti, said that he could manage the task, and to prove his assertion he placed the coral near an ant-hole, and after steeping a thread in honey, laid the thread a little distance away. The ants thereupon drew the thread through the opening in the stone. The king gave the child many presents, and sent along much more work to be done, which the child executed under the direction of his mother. The king then insisted on the boy marrying the daughter of the



Chetti, and gave him as a wedding-gift many grants of land.

Since that day the Kammalans and the Chettis have been united in the closest friendship. The caste thread of these people is the one the ants drew through the coral, and not the sacred thread of the Brahmans.

The Indians invent the most elaborate origins for their castes, and actually believe in them. A gardener in Madura told me that his mother had actually had intercourse with the temple god, who was not impersonated by any priest. No less a deity than the idol himself came down from his niche, and begat the gardener's younger brother. Indeed, so emphatically had the woman told the story, she had foisted her second son upon the caste as a holy man. It is quite in the order of descent for a caste to spring from the breath of a goddess ; the hair of a god ; the union of a god and a mortal ; or even, as in the case of the Reddi Bhumalu, from the discarded cloth of the holy Parvati.

#### KAMMALANS OF MALABAR

The Kammalans of Malabar, like the Nairs, celebrate a mock marriage. If the Kammalan has become pregnant before the mock marriage (although it seems impossible as this ceremony is observed when a girl is twelve), the parents must tell the community that the father of the coming child belongs to their own caste. If the paternity cannot be traced, and a council which has been held fails to fasten the honour on some man, the girl is outcasted. She still continues to live in her mother's house, the outcasting simply barring her from religious observances.

When the actual betrothal ceremony takes place, the girl is married to all the brothers of one family. It is not to be supposed that the horoscopes of all these men would agree with the girl's own, but if one horoscope is harmonious the requirement has been met. In some instances cohabitation is permitted from the night of betrothal ; the oldest brother having priority, and the others in order of their seniority. If the girl becomes pregnant, the marriage must take place before the fifth month of pregnancy. The day after betrothal

the bridegrooms come to the bride's house, bringing presents for the bride and her family.

This marriage is by no means classed as polyandry. The brothers are allowed to take other wives whenever they wish, and the new wives are supposed to extend their favours to the husband's brothers, if the brothers express a desire to cohabit with them. Sometimes a girl will have husbands ranging from twenty-five to five in age. And she may be well over thirty when her youngest husband is old enough for any conjugal arrangement.

If cohabitation has not been allowed to begin at betrothal, the eldest brother cohabits with the bride on the wedding-night, and special days are arranged for each brother. As a matter of fact, however, in many families the men do not claim their privileges. The girl may select one among the number with whom she becomes intimate, or she may not care for any of her husbands. Her fancy may even alight on some outsider not a member of her caste, for Malabar women are a law unto themselves.

The Kammalans are frequently well-educated. Many have a knowledge of Sanskrit, and most of them speak English. The women like jewellery, but they wear no nose-rings. They are all rather fine-looking, and some of them are really beautiful.

After a building has been erected, the demons who inhabit the trees used in its construction are worshipped. They are asked to take up their abode in other trees, and sacrifices are made to them.

The Malayala Kaminalans, unlike the Tamil Kammalans, are not a thread-wearing caste, although they sometimes put a thread on for work before temple images. The Kammalans are a polluting caste, and must stand several feet from Brahmans.

To-day many Kammalans ignore the teachings of their caste, and even in marriage have adopted the Western ideas. This emancipation, none the less, is more noticeable in the wealthy communities; as in most districts they exceed the Westerner and frankly espouse free-love. Members of the lower divisions of the caste, such as stonemasons and carpenters, often find it necessary for economic reasons to share one woman in the family.

## IDOL MAKERS

Anyone who has been fortunate enough to penetrate inside some of the temples, can testify to the skill of the idol makers. Visitors may enter the temple at Madura, the oldest in India, by paying fifteen rupees ; there being no worship in there to-day, and anything which could be desecrated by unbelievers having been removed. The carvings on the temple-cars at Madura are amongst the finest in India.

The idol-maker's craft is hereditary. If the ancestors of a certain craftsman have been famous, he starts well ahead of his colleagues whose progenitors had no such reputation. Men of this craft must not eat flesh nor drink any liquor, openly, and they wear the Brahman thread, and affect the Brahman way of living.

Every temple has two kinds of idols ; those fastened to altars or to the ground, and those used in processions and festivals. Even in poorly equipped temples there are dozens of gods, important and minor. Many generations see them standing in their places, black and begrimed, and covered with ashes, oil and paste. Age and filth add to their sanctity, and they are not replaced until absolutely crumbling. Only desecration removes them.

If it were not for his annual salary from the temple, the idol-maker would be very badly off. Superstition stays the hand of any craftsman who would increase his income by a little judicious desecration. The temple and its contents are holy ground, and few Indians have the temerity to desecrate it. There are, however, always certain dare-devils who, because of madness or indifference, ignore anything sacred.

Last November a nineteen-year-old boy, assisted by another aged fifteen, murdered a girl of eight in the Siva temple in the village of Neduvasal. The boys were inspired by greed, and had decided to entice young girls into some secluded place and steal their jewels. In the afternoon, while they were loitering near the temple grounds, they saw little Pappammal, the daughter of Ratnan Pillay, playing in the compound of the Siva temple, and wearing a gold chain and four gold bangles. The boys lured her into the temple, and while one held her by the throat the other sought to remove her chain. The child tried to cry out, and threatened to tell

her parents, whereupon she was taken behind the idol and the older boy dashed her head against the base of the figure until she ceased to struggle. The boys then took the chain from her neck, but left the bangles on her wrist. A low moan from the girl announcing that she was not dead, the murderers completed their work with an iron temple-instrument. As it was still daylight, they could not move the body. The priest came in and performed his evening worship, not knowing that the mangled corpse lay behind the god, and at midnight the boys returned and threw the girl's body into the Kadalazhiar River. They were unable to remove the bangles because *rigor mortis* had set in. Later, when the girl's body was found and identified by her parents, the boys confessed and produced the fatal instrument which they had hidden behind the idol. The older boy was sentenced to transportation for life, and the younger was acquitted. After such a crime, the entire temple was desecrated. Purification was necessary and also the renewal of all the images.

During the festival of the *holi* (the annual worship of Kama, the god of love) the idol is frequently polluted. Some worshipper will solemnly make a fecal deposit on the goddess, but as this is the yearly occasion when lust in all its forms must be released, it is done as an act of worship. Many other things are done to, and before, the goddess which are too disgusting to mention, but during this ceremony the image is not desecrated.

Idol-makers receive many demands for wayside figures. Throughout the land Ganapati, the elephant-headed god, is worshipped, and he fairly lines the roads of south India. Almost every mile his shrines are seen under the trees. Viran, the little god who likes toddy; Mariamma, the smallpox goddess; and the evil spirit, Sangili-Karappan, vie with Ganapati for popularity.

The idol-craftsman, while he shows considerable skill, has a very antiquated method of working. His casting substance is wax, and he works over it for days until he produces the exact image that he has in mind. When the figure satisfies him, he covers it with a coating of clay and places it in a kiln. A hole has been left in the figure into which, after it has been well-baked, the metal is poured. The heat of the kiln melts the wax which runs out through the hole. When the metal

has solidified, the clay covering is removed. Usually a compound of brass, copper, and lead is used. Gold and silver are mixed with the cheaper metals for the principal gods, if the temple which has ordered them can afford it.

When the clay coating has been taken away, the metal figure is improved with chisel, file and polishing.

Some idol-makers keep a stock of legs and arms, and an image that is not too badly broken can be fitted with spare parts. When an arm or leg has been replaced, the join caused by the operation is covered with flowers, or with some ornament. There are tricks in all trades, and sometimes the idol-maker covers the clay figure with a metal wash, leaving the wax inside. This forgery has been discovered even in the case of the principal gods, when they have been damaged in processions or at festivals.

After a child is born in the home of an idol-maker, or a goldsmith, presents should be distributed among the dancing-girls. This custom is still observed by some of the more orthodox craftsmen.



ONE OF THE TORTURES OF TAIPUSAN. I  
BY SIVA'S TRIDENT. (See page 36)



## CHAPTER XIV

### CASTES. (LABOURERS)

#### VODDAS

**T**HE Voddas are a Telugu people, coming originally from Orissa. They dig wells, and engage in earth-work such as constructing tanks. They are hopelessly ignorant, and find it impossible to calculate the amount of work they have done. To add up a column of figures is a feat quite beyond them. They are at the mercy of their employer, and because of this they frequently receive treatment which would be humorous, were it not so downright pathetic. They drink toddy continuously, and are usually intoxicated; yet this does not seem seriously to interfere with their work. They have no restrictions as regards food or morals, and their only fear is that of polluting the higher castes.

Polygamy is practised by the Voddas, and either sex may procure a divorce for a few rupees. The women, however, are not so fortunate as the men, for a woman is restricted to but eighteen partners. A woman who has made seven changes is looked upon as blessed, and her assistance at a marriage augurs good fortune to the contracting couple.

The Vodda women, as well as the men, work on the roads, digging the dirt and carrying it in baskets to the section under repair. While engaged in this work, they suspend their babies in cloths, hammock-fashion, from the trees. The Public Works Department gives employment to many members of this caste.

They are fine-looking people. The women are tall and straight, with the bearing of queens, and owe their carriage to the weights they have to support on their heads. The men are splendidly-muscled creatures, moving with a languid grace and rhythm only found in people of the sun. They wear Siva's trident on their foreheads, and also sometimes on their breasts.



## MALAS

The story of the Malas resembles the Red Sea story of the Bible, except that, unlike the Hindu god, the God of the Christians did not demand a human sacrifice to part the waters.

According to legend, the Kapus and the Baliyas, fleeing from Mohammedan invaders, came to the Pennar River when it was in flood. Their pursuers were right upon their heels, and while they were considering what to do, a certain Mala offered up one of his children as a sacrifice to the river goddess. Immediately, then, the water divided and the fugitives crossed in safety. When the Mohammedans arrived, they found the river again in flood, and legend fails to relate whether they also had a child with them, and if so, whether the goddess would have accepted it and in like fashion have assisted Islam.

Since the traditional dividing of the waters, the Malas have been the custodians of the goddess Gauri and her jewels. The Kapus borrow the jewels from the Malas when they wish to worship the goddess, and it is to be hoped that the Malas are more to be trusted than the priest at Mysore City who officiated at the temple of the Maharaja of Mysore. This worthy borrowed the gold jewels from the necks of the gods, and substituted brass ones. It took him twenty years to complete the transfer, as he was able to change only one a year, and the craftsman who copied the jewels had to work secretly and with difficulty. When a jewel was duplicated in the baser metal, the priest and his associate melted the original and sold the gold. With this wealth in their hands, however, they could think of nothing more exciting to do than to take girls to the cinema and the toddy shops. An official audit disclosed the forgery, and the Maharaja was dumbfounded when he learned that his adored Krishna, Siva, and Vishnu had been so desecrated. This happened last year.

## KUDUMI

The Kudumi, or rice pounders, caste is found in and around Travancore and Cochin. They are supposed to have emigrated from Goa, when it was so persecuted by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century. Many of the Kudumis are engaged in

domestic service, but others still keep to their original pursuits of agriculture and trading. They are supposed to derive their name from the occupation of rice-pounding in the homes of the Brahmans. They are permitted to worship at the temples of the Konkana Brahmans, and they worship Brahma in February on the occasion of the full moon. The pipal tree is worshipped by them, and a lighted lamp is placed on the ground beside it every night.

At the menstrual period the Kudumi woman is impure for four days. She must stand at a distance of seven feet, and close her mouth and nostrils with the palm of her hand, as at such time her breath is supposed to be very contaminating. Whoever her shadow falls upon during this period will be most unlucky. No hut is set apart for her as is the habit with so many of the other castes.

Kudumi girls must be married before puberty, or the entire family is excommunicated. During the marriage ceremony the tulsi plant is worshipped while the bride and bridegroom husk rice. The *tali* is tied on the bride's neck by the bridegroom, and a friend of the couple tie their legs together. The tying of the tali and the legs take place on the first day of the marriage rite. On the fourth day the covering is taken from the bride's breasts and tied round her neck, while her nose is pierced for the nose-screw.

Kudumi widows remarry, and usually the second husband is a widower. The older members of the caste are cremated, the younger are buried.

The Kudumi furnishes many medicine-men, who are supposed to have great power helped by the gift of magic. These men also are supposed to exert a magnetic influence over wild animals and snakes, which may be the reason why they frequently appear as snake-charmers. A friend of mine swears by their skill in curing sprains and taking cricks out of the bones. They believe in blood-letting for the cure of rheumatism, and use leeches for the purpose.

## CHAPTER XV

### CASTES. (NOMADS)

#### BONTHUK

**T**HE Bonthuk caste, scattered about the Guntur and Bellary districts, leads a nomadic life. These people are for ever moving from one place to another and carry their huts with them. In their case portable houses would scarcely recognize their primitive ancestors, which consist of a few sticks with a wisp of straw thrown over them.

This caste has no definite names for their children, but will name them after anything they happen to see, any place they happen to be in, or any word they hear. Thus Parrot, Bear, Tiger, Madras, Salem, Ranipet, Doctor, Governor, and Lawyer are some of the names the Bonthuk children bear.

With them a man guilty of a crime is sometimes fined, but he is usually tried by ordeal. He must take a nut out of boiling cow-dung water, and if his hand is injured he is guilty. He must then go into the forest, and live alone until his judges decide that he may return to the caste.

The Bonthuks cultivate the land to a certain extent, but they are mostly engaged in collecting bamboo, straightening it by fire, and selling it in the bazaar. Before they collect it a sheep, a goat, and a few chickens are sacrificed to the local god, who is usually represented by a pile of stones.

The marriage ceremony differs from that of most of the castes. A pig is purchased, its legs are tied together, and it is carried round the couple, who sit inside the *pandal*. Musicians follow, adding their infernal noise to the shrill squealing of the pig. The more noise the better, as this drives away any evil spirits who might attach themselves to the newly-married pair. After the ceremony the pig is equally divided, by splitting it down the centre. One portion is given to the bride's family, and the other to the family of the bridegroom. The bride's portion must be eaten on the day of the ceremony.

Before the bride goes to the house of the bridegroom, the couple must promise the priest of the caste that there will be no quarrelling in their lives. Needless to say, this is one of those promises only made to be broken.

During the menstrual period the husband and the members of his family must observe pollution with the women. At this time some money must be paid to the priest, or to the headman who officiates as priest. On the ninth day all the household cooking-pots must be thrown away.

The Bonthuk dead are buried lying on the left side. A few days later food is given to the crows. On the eleventh day a cloth is put down on the floor of the house of the deceased, and leaves containing food are placed on it. The food is gathered up after the shade has taken what it requires, and is put into a basket. The basket is placed in a hut which has been built for the occasion somewhere near a stream. The food is to feed the servants of the god of death, and this is comparable to the rites of the ancient Egyptians, who so thoroughly looked after those who ministered to the dead.

#### KURUVIKKARAN

The women of the Kuruvikkaran caste are the dirtiest women in India. They must wear the same skirt, with nothing under it, until it drops off, and even when bathing they must not remove the garment. Anything coming in contact with it is at once polluted. These women adorn themselves with shell-beads and bracelets, and stain their teeth with sulphur or iron. But they are not permitted to make themselves really attractive (i.e. by blackening their teeth) until after marriage.

No matter where a Kuruvikkaran woman goes in the daytime, or what she does, at night she must return and sleep with her husband. Failing to do this, she must walk twenty paces carrying a red-hot piece of iron. If she drops the iron she has been guilty of adultery. Another form of ordeal is to dip her hand into a pot of boiling cow-dung water and pick up a small coin. If she is innocent she can husk rice immediately she has taken her hand from the boiling liquid.

Marriage is between adults, and the ceremony lasts for five days. After the marriage the bride's father takes the bride to the home of her father-in-law. The father-in-law must

promise not to beat her when she is ill, and to give her enough to eat. The bridegroom, who has gone to his house in advance, tells his father-in-law that he has never touched another woman. In fact, he goes on to explain that he has never even smiled at one. He concludes his recitation by saying : " If she smiles at another man I shall drive her back to you." The bride then presents her mother-in-law with a string of beads.

This caste worships Kali (Siva's wife), and each division possesses a small figure of the goddess on a plate. These images are kept in the custody of the priest ; none the less, they are usually pledged. Moneylenders give considerable sums on them, for they know they must be redeemed before the festivals.

When it is time for the annual festival of Kali, one of the elders of the caste piles seeds into five heaps. When the seeds are counted, the result must agree with a forecast. If it does not, the festival is postponed for a year, according to the wish of the goddess. Nine goats and buffalos are sacrificed at the festival, and a member of the caste, after sucking the blood from the throat of a goat, is able to give oracular replies to any question. This caste assembles for the Sakta two or three times a year if possible, the filthy practices of this orgy appealing to these sex-maddened people. Small silver figures are used at the *sakta*, but these are always mortgaged, and are lent to the caste during the festival.

## CHAPTER XVI

### CASTES. (CARTERS)

#### LAMBADIS

**T**HE Lambadis are carters found all over western and southern India. They have different customs, sub-names, and dialects according to their districts. Several legends are mentioned to explain their origin ; some of them claiming descent from the Moguls, while others assert the caste to have always been in the south. History says that they supplied Comte de Bussy with cattle and grain, when he was besieged by the Nizam's army at Hyderabad. It is also recorded that the English army obtained grain from them during the Mysore war. The English are supposed to have regretted taking them into their service, as their thieving propensities could not be checked and they ravished the country through which they passed.

In former days, before starting out on a journey, they buried a child in the ground up to its neck. They then drove their bullocks over it, and the thoroughness with which it was trampled decided the success of the journey. When the *Meriah* rite was the order of the day, and not as at present held only in secret, it was the duty of the Lambadis and the Kondhs to buy or steal human beings for sacrifice.

The Lambadi women are very strong, and can drive cattle and perform many outdoor labours with ease. They adore ornaments and trappings, and dress themselves in anything they can find. At the present time, however, economic conditions have in a great measure reduced their finery. In the matter of decoration weight with them was no consideration. They wore ivory bracelets from the wrist to the shoulder, increasing in size and heaviness on the upper arm, while their legs were encircled with rings of lead, copper, or brass. A kind of bodice, literally covered with shells, beads, and metal, was tied round their breast, and their hair was bedecked with

every imaginable trinket. It was also, and still is, bountifully supplied with lice, for it is seldom loosened from the plaits in which it hangs to be combed or washed.

Not the slightest attention is paid to cleanliness by these women. Their bodies are washed when they are born and when they die, seldom during the interim. They are chaste, which is perhaps not surprising, as no one whose olfactory nerves are normal could approach them. Their husbands are pleased to give them as many ornaments as they can afford, and the husband's position is frequently estimated accordingly.

Many of these people have given up carting for agriculture. Nevertheless, no matter what their work may be, or what remuneration they may receive for it, they are criminals by instinct. Their cattle occupy most of the available space, leaving little room for the tiny huts, with no opening except the doorway, into which men, women, and children crowd. If the men cannot find occupation as carters or agriculturists, they retire to the jungle tracts with their families and live upon jungle produce.

Their marriage ceremonies, like many other customs of this caste, vary according to the district. In north Arcot the marriage ceremony lasts three days. On the first day everybody gets drunk, and not trusting the stimulating effects of toddy, a drug is added to the beverage, making intoxication doubly sure. When everyone is mellow, the bridegroom's parents bring four bullocks and fifty rupees to the bride's house. The bridegroom ties a silver *tali* on the bride's neck, and the marriage is complete. The feasting and drinking must continue for the remaining two days. On the third day the bride, in new clothes and all the ornaments which could be found to decorate her, goes to the bridegroom's house, driving a pair of bullocks.

When the first son is born, the wife receives from her husband another silver badge resembling the *tali*, which is also tied round her neck. She receives a third badge on the birth of the second son. When two sons are born she is supposed to have fulfilled her duty, and the three badges are welded together. Sons are always welcome; but only with the birth of the first two are there any ceremonies.

In another district the marriage ceremony is quite different.

The bridegroom arrives at the bride's house at night, with a cloth over his head and a bag containing trinkets and betel-nut. Outside the house a square is made with earthen pots, and within the square two grain-pounding pestles are placed. The bride and bridegroom stand in the square, and cloths are tied round their shoulders by the officiating Brahman priest, who has tied some money in each cloth. The couple then join hands, and walk seven times round the pestles chanting a marriage song. They afterwards sit on a blanket that has been placed beside the pestles, and cover themselves entirely with a cloth. Under the cloth they exchange seven little balls of rice, which they eat. Following this, they go into the house and untie their shoulder-cloths and take out the money. This is the end of the first ceremony.

Next day they bathe separately, and feasting begins. The relatives and friends become very merry and boisterous. That evening the bride's mother ties the badge to a lock of hair on the girl's temple, which signifies that she is a married woman. A bunch of gaily-coloured tassels is tied to her hair at the back, and an embroidered belt from which every conceivable thing has been suspended is put round her waist. The next day the girl goes to her husband's house.

An unique custom distinguishes the wedding ceremony of still another village. The Brahman priest is the only man present, and as soon as he has united the couple the women surround him and pinch him. Some of them slap his face, and they have even been known to pull his clothes off. The priest takes this treatment in good part and as a joke, as he receives quite a substantial fee.

Divorce among the Lambadis is recognized, and widows are permitted to remarry. When a woman remarries during the life of her first mate, the second husband must compensate his predecessor. On these occasions a sum of money usually changes hands, and a feast is given to which all are invited. The children of remarried widows are barred from the legal marriage ceremony for three generations.

One of the north Arcot divisions does not permit widows to marry; but every man wishing to live with a widow, on payment of twenty rupees and two buffalos to her family, may take her as concubine. The children of such an arrangement are considered legitimate.



During her husband's lifetime a woman may desert him for any man who takes her fancy, providing the paramour pays her husband the cost of the wedding ceremony. A woman, however, who wishes to cohabit with another man, must leave her husband. Adultery is looked upon with horror by this caste.

In Coimbatore both the men and the women are addicted to heavy drinking, and the subject is with them a matter for boasting. In this district, too, the women take off their skirt, and in fact everything they are wearing, at bedtime and put it under their heads as a pillow. They worship many gods, and also perform the *sakta*. Sometimes a widow takes the virgin's place at this ceremony, which has degenerated into a drunken bout. Frequently the performers become too drunk to engage in further licentiousness.

This caste observes the feast of the *holi*. The chief member of the caste and his wife fast on the first day of the feast, and worship two mud images. One represents Kama, and the other his wife, Rati. Men and women dance round a fire during this festival, engaging in all sorts of absurd antics. In the old days the god of love was worshipped with orgies which left nothing to the imagination. Only in secret could this be done now, and as the feast of the *holi* takes place in the daytime, whereas the *sakta* takes place at night in the jungle, the use of profanity and lewd remarks must suffice.

These people believe that if they become ill, they can avoid death by moving from one village to another. A goat or a chicken is sacrificed midway between the place they have left and the one to which they are going. In former days the creature for sacrifice was buried alive. When they buried a human being alive, to be the scapegoat of the disease demon, a lump of paste was put on the head into which oil was poured. Four wicks were put in the oil and lighted, and the men and women joined hands and danced round the victim until he died. From force of circumstances this ceremony is managed differently to-day. Now, before any member of the caste starts on a journey the priest lights a fire, calls upon the goddess for protection, and treads the fire out. He is supposed to receive some oracular message while he is doing this, which he tells to the person departing.

## CHAPTER XVII

### CASTES. (MISCELLANEOUS)

#### KHOJAS

**C**ASTRATION is not now practised in India, eunuchs being no longer employed to guard the zenanas and harems of wealthy Indians. Hindus were never castrated, but certain congenital eunuchs exist among the Hindus.

In the days when eunuchs were considered a necessity there were two recognized classes : the Khojas, or artificial eunuchs, and the Hijras, or natural eunuchs. In some perverted cases men were impressed with the idea of femininity and were dressed as girls in childhood, being taught to ape the speech and manners of women. In such instances their future profession was to be that of eunuchs.

Hindu parents are very much distressed when their boys are born with weak generative organs. As a man's entrance into heaven depends upon his having a son, it can readily be seen that in a Hindu home generative weakness is a tragedy. Boys thus poorly equipped cultivate singing and attitudinizing in the bazaars, or else hire themselves out to men for the purpose of sodomy. There are records of Hindus who have subjected themselves to castration for religious reasons, while others, naturally impotent, have accepted a religious life with the hope that they would not be born again in the same helpless state.

When the operation of castration was done, it was performed by the barbers. The patient sat on an upturned pot, after having been well drugged with *bhang* (Indian hemp). The entire genitals were seized by one hand and the barber ran a bamboo lath, slit in the centre, down close to the pubis, detaching the whole of the genitals at the root. Boiling gingelly oil was poured into the wound to staunch the bleeding, and this was the only dressing applied to the wound. Ir

Hyderabad castration was performed at the age of sixteen. A pit, three feet deep, was dug in the ground and filled with ashes. After the operation the patient was obliged to sit on the ashes, with legs crossed, for three days.

It is said that the natural eunuchs sing filthy songs at the doors of shopkeepers in the bazaars, refusing to go away until the shopkeeper gives them some money. It is also said that the dancing-girls employ such men to decoy clients to them. On census reports they return themselves as men engaged in singing and dancing.

### BARBERS

The barbers, who have their own caste, possess many duties, and remind one of Figaro in the *Barber of Seville*. In an earlier age they occupied a position of honour in the courts of the Maharajas, where their office was personally to wait upon his Highness, as their touch did not pollute. On the occasions of festivals and ceremonial rites they washed the feet of the guests, looked after their jewels, and carried articles used in worship.

The barbers officiated at weddings and funerals as they do to-day. The women of the barber's caste waited upon the women, but they did not attend ceremonies; and in some cases they were permitted to remove the food left by the Brahmans. Now the offices of the barber have deteriorated, and failing to find the opportunity to ply his trade, he can become a domestic servant or even a cart driver under the pinch of poverty. This is quite a descent in the social scale for one who in former times could blow out a light only when he was wearing silk.

### JEWS

It is probable that the Jewish colony, not exceeding two thousand souls and now located in Cochin State, has been in existence since the days of King Solomon. Many authorities believe that King Solomon drew at least some of his great treasure from the Malabar coast, and that trade thus established caused the first settlement of Jews in this locality.

In conformity with the history of the Jews, this colony has passed through many vicissitudes. Since the days of the early settlers the colony has been the victim of every political

intrigue which has swept the country. The Portuguese, believing the Jews to have been influenced by the Dutch, razed their quarter to the ground, burned the Synagogue together with many valuable historical documents, and forced the Jews to fly to the hills. At other times they were harassed and persecuted by Mohammedan invasions. But with the dogged persistence of their race they have maintained their traditions and customs.

Passing through their quarter, which is in close proximity to the British Residency in Cochin, one can almost picture oneself in a street of Jerusalem. The architecture is purely Levantine, Yiddish is the language, and the colony observes all the customs practised by orthodox Jewry to-day.

During the period of Dutch occupation trade improved and Jewish rights were maintained, but it would appear that the Jews' greatest periods of prosperity were under Hindu monarchs. From charters in their possession, the Hindu Rajas must have considered them of high repute, and they were accorded the privilege of riding in carriages, possessing elephants, and using fans after the fashion of the nobility. In short, they enjoyed all the appurtenances of high-caste Hindus, and at one time their elder, Joseph Rabban, was given precedence over the five castes.

Residents of the colony point out with great pride the two outstanding features of the quarter : the Dutch clock, which commemorates the assistance the Jews gave the Dutch against the Portuguese, and the Synagogue paved with blue tiles of genuine Canton medallion. Rumour has it that these tiles were not come by honestly, and that they were originally ordered from China by the Raja, who was ruling under Dutch auspices, for his Durbar Hall. The Jews, however, who were rebuilding the Synagogue destroyed by the Portuguese, decided that the tiles being just what was required for their place of worship, gave the Raja to understand that in their manufacture bullocks' blood had been used, making it sacrilege for such to grace a Hindu palace. The Raja, after raving at the slaughter of his sacred animal by foreigners, requested the Jews to remove the offensive articles from his sight at once.

The colony is divided into two sects, the Black and the White. While the religious observances of the two sects are identical, the insidious influence of caste has crept in and the

split is as wide as between many castes under the Hindu religion. Anthropology seems to have stiffened the claim of the White Jews that their co-religionists have degenerated the pure strain by intermarriage with an alien race. The Black Jews, however, insist that the Whites are interlopers and that they were the original settlers. Be this as it may, the Black Jews have far more documentary evidence to prove their unbroken line than have the Whites. Caste has influenced the synagogue observances to such an extent that the White Rabbi enters the Black Synagogue as a senior, whereas the Black Rabbi can only enter the White Synagogue as a hearer. This is so notwithstanding the fact that, according to the belief of orthodox Grand Rabbis, Tabila, or the holy rabbinical bath, levels all social disabilities.

Many efforts have been made to overcome the Jewish colour bar, but with little success. At one time the Grand Rabbi at Jerusalem was appealed to, and his reply was to the effect that to agree in the nest birds must be of the same colour. Of recent years, however, in matters of education, both sects have decided to pool their resources and share the same educational grants in one school.

The White Jews wear a long tunic of rich colour, buttoned to the neck, and full white trousers. For all ordinary occasions they wear a white skull cap, but don a turban to enter the Synagogue. The Blacks favour the Mohammedan dress. Both parties wear wooden sandals. The women wear brightly coloured clothes, and the point of difference between the two sects is whether the women's heads should be covered or not. At one time argument on this point became so fierce that the two parties went to law, with the result that the Raja made a decree that each must do as they pleased.

Whereas the Whites celebrate their marriages on Sunday, the Blacks are more orthodox and still retain the ancient custom of celebrating a marriage on Tuesdays after sundown. Marriage festivals are kept up for only seven days in the case of the Whites, but the Blacks double this period. Both sects have adopted the Hindu custom of tying the *tali* before going to the Jewish ceremony at the Synagogue. The badge is usually tied round the bride's neck by some near relation of the bridegroom, while the guests shout "*Kurava, kurava!*" The two sects do not intermarry.

It is said to-day that the colony is suffering from too much intermarriage, and that unless new blood is infused it is apt to die out.

Both sects observe the feasts and fasts of the orthodox religion. The sacrifice of a kid is not made at the Passover, and no blood is sprinkled on the door-posts. They content themselves with the distribution of unleavened bread. The fast known as the Day of Atonement finds the entire colony within their Synagogues from 5 a.m. to 7 p.m., and the Feast of Tabernacles is observed with much ceremony.

### “ SYRIAN CHRISTIANS ”

Another illustration of the assimilation of Hindu practices into other religions is afforded by what is known as the Syrian Christians of Travancore. Actually, the term is a misnomer ; there being not a genuine Syrian in the whole district.

Tradition has it that the origin of these Christians was conversions made by Saint Thomas himself, and hence the appellation of “ Syrian.” St. Thomas is supposed to have landed on the Malabar coast about A.D. 52, and to have established seven churches in different parts of Cochin and Travancore. Most of his converts were from Nambudiri Brahmans and other families.

With the lapse of time the Christians, owing to religious and social differences, have split into various denominations. Some acknowledge only the Pope as their spiritual head, while others still admit the dictation of the Metropolitan of Antioch, by whom all holy water must be blessed before it can be used in the consecration of their churches. These churches have been granted charters from time to time by various Hindu Rajas, and with these charters many privileges which are still jealously guarded.

It is not to be expected that communities founded in such a fashion could escape the influence of caste, and other Hindu practices. Caste prejudices are as strong in these communities as in other communities, and polluting castes and Pariahs are as studiously avoided as with their Hindu brethren. The Roman and Syrian communities refuse to intermarry, and any ties between them subject one or both of the parties to excommunication.

Among the Hindu customs which have been retained by the converts is the ceremony of the child's first rice-feed, which the Hindus call *annaprasanam*. It is celebrated by both Christians and Hindus in the sixth month after birth. The Malayali festival of Onam is also celebrated.

The *tali* is as much a part of the Christian marriage as of the Hindu marriage, and in case of widowhood both Hindu and Christian remove the badge. No birth, again, is complete without the horoscope ; but some of the Christians say that they keep up the practice because it is considered far better than Government registration, while others assert that horoscopes are a necessary adjunct to the plan of their lives.

Death pollution with these Christians lasts from ten to fifteen days, and can only be removed by a ceremony in the church.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### ASTROLOGERS

THE astrologers were flourishing in Travancore when Marco Paolo visited India in the thirteenth century, and still occupy one of the most important places among the castes. In fact they are second to the priests, as nothing can be done without consulting them. Their progenitors, they believe, were a Gandharva woman and a Brahman saint who lived in the Western Ghats. The grandson of these two illustrious ones propitiated the god Subrahmanyah, who presided over astronomy, and acquired from the god the name Nalika, which means truthfulness. Many astrologers still call themselves Nali, the truthful. The Kaniyans, according to tradition, were Brahmans who lost their position as their predictions became less and less accurate. In any case, whatever opprobrium may once have rested upon their name, the astrologers have now been reinstated into favour and as formerly their calculations govern the lives of their countrymen. No one can get married, start on a journey, or begin any undertaking without consulting the astrologer. In certain homes a child is begotten only when the wise one has given his sanction, and outlined the moment of conception, and it is sometimes necessary to have his permission if one is to die properly.

There is a legend which relates what happened to the king of astrologers when he was temporarily outcasted with his subjects. The ruler had caste the horoscope of his son, and concluded from his calculations that his son would live to be very old. Unfortunately, however, he was mistaken in his prediction and his son died when he was still a boy. Unable to discover his error of judgment, he took the horoscope to a famous colleague of the Chola Kingdom, who, having foreseen the visit, directed the king to worship a deity who would aid him in making out predictions. Accordingly he went to the



Trichur temple, and spent many days adoring the deity. Soon after he made remarkable predictions, and became so well-known as a simple astrologer that his fame extended to Cochin and Travancore, where he won the respect and admiration of the rulers of these two states, who invited him to caste their horoscopes.

Now one of the rulers had a Brahman friend for whom he ordered a horoscope, and the Brahman, hearing that his *guru* (teacher) at Benares was seriously ill, asked the astrologer if it would be possible for him to see his teacher before his death. The astrologer directed him to the southern side of the Trichur temple, where he would see two persons coming towards him. These persons were really the servants of Yama (the god of death), and on the Brahman's request to see his teacher the servants bade him touch them and he immediately found himself beside the dying man in Benares. When the Brahman was asked by the friends of the dying man who had sent him, he mentioned the name of the astrologer, and the friends thereupon cursed the astrologer and said that he would be outcasted.

The astrologer, learning of the curse from his own horoscope, wandered into the forest in a state of extreme desperation. There the goddess of the Trichur temple appeared before him in a dream, and told him that he would begin a new life with a Kaniya woman and would have several sons. A few days after the goddess had appeared to him the astrologer met the Kaniya woman, and in due course she bore him several sons whom he educated in the lore of his profession. When the sons were grown men, the goddess obtained for the family an important place in the Hindu social system, and on the famous astrologer's death his body was placed in a coffin and buried in the courtyard of his house.

The astrologer's grave is still pointed out to visitors. There is a platform round it, and it is covered with a thatched roof, while until a few years ago a lighted lamp stood on the platform day and night. Any astrologer who makes his calculations before the platform is helped by the spirit of the dead astrologer, and his predictions are sure to come true. Even the date and conditions of a future birth can be calculated before this platform. The descendants of the great astrologer are called Pazhur Kaniyans, and they are consulted by the

people of Malabar, Cochin, and Travancore. They are said to be always accurate in their predictions.

In India the astrologer is the guiding spirit of all the social and domestic concerns of the community. He is consulted as to the why and wherefore of calamities, the failure or success of any proceeding, the sex of an unborn child, remedies for the sick, the giving of loans, borrowing of money, paying of bills, the proper time to begin the study of any subject, the investiture of the sacred thread, the sowing of seeds, the harvesting of crops. There is, in fact, nothing too great or too trivial for his services, and no one thinks of questioning his advice.

The astrologer has no prescribed scale of fees. Wealthy people pay him lavishly, and the poor people give him as much as they can afford. If a consultant comes empty-handed, the astrologer is not supposed to refuse his services, but the horoscope of such a parsimonious or poverty-stricken one is always uninteresting and takes but a few moments to calculate. On festivals and public occasions a fixed scale of fees is followed.

The astrologer's busy time is from July to February, the period of harvest and marriage. His most lucrative business is casting what is known as a life horoscope, recording events from birth to death. In such a work he usually lays down rules for propitiating the gods and the planets, and averting calamities. He also delineates the character, mental and spiritual, of the client. Everyone who has twenty-five rupees seems to be provided with a life horoscope.

Many members of the profession do what is called "verbal reading," and for this a bag of shells, or a bag of rice, is used with the almanac. The astrologer sits on a mat, and after tossing the rice or the shells on the floor, works them into little patterns, while he chants *mantrams* in praise of his *guru* and of the deity, invoking their help. He then draws a design, consisting of twelve compartments, on the floor with chalk. If he has chosen shells, he touches his ears with them and arranges them in the compartments of the design. After a long unintelligible harangue, in which he seems to be addressing the shells, he makes a few predictions, taking care to be as vague as possible.

Numerous stories are told of the astrological skill of the

Pazhur Kaniyans. One relates how the planets, Mercury and Venus, on arriving at the house of one of the Kaniyans were asked by him to wait at the gate. The Kaniyan then jumped into a well, there to conduct some prayers in the hope of keeping the planets waiting permanently. His prayers were answered, and the two planets remain at the gate of every Kaniyan, to help him with his predictions.

In addition to astrology, these people practise sorcery and exorcism. Devils are driven out of homes and villages by a devil-dance. If a person is suspected of being possessed by a devil, several Kaniyans go to his home in the guise of demons and rush toward the affected person, whereupon the devil in a fright departs immediately. Disease is cured by cutting a rope the length of the person who is ill, and making knots in it. Goat-hair is then burned, and the rope is passed several times through the smoke. Sometimes a chicken is killed, and some of its blood is poured on the burning goat-hair.

Some friends of mine, living near Madura, once claimed to have discovered an Indian medium who could actually materialize departed spirits. To test the miraculous powers of the medium, my friends had put him naked into an absolutely bare room. At the window and door of the room two men were posted, to be certain that nothing passed in or out. The materialization duly occurred, and they saw a white mist, or drapery, floating about the room near the medium. Satisfied, they passed him his clothes and he dressed, and on coming out of the room he showed no exhaustion whatever. Later a man, who could not believe in visitors from another sphere, discovered how the materialization occurred. The boy medium, who was not more than twenty, had inserted into his rectum a tube filled with yards of the thinnest of white chiffon. As the spirits could appear only in a darkened room, the method was obvious. The medium used to make quite a respectable sum with his séances.

Another means of increasing the income of the Kaniyans is the sale of *yantrams* (charms). A *yantram* is written on gold, or silver, or paper, and worn on the body ; usually round the wrist or the arm. The charm consists of fifty-one letters, but no words are spelled ; and each letter has its meaning. A *yantram* is useless unless a magic rite has been performed for it. There are charms to protect one against sorcery or devils ;

to secure the aid of a goddess ; to prevent Pulantini, the demon who eats children, from coming near the infants ; to avert miscarriage ; to increase knowledge ; to please lovers ; to prevent barrenness ; and to relieve a woman in labour. Sometimes the charm is drawn on butter, and swallowed. When this method is adopted, it must be repeated for forty days, while if a woman is the recipient, she must have no sexual intercourse during that time. Charms are also drawn in ashes or cow-dung on a cloth, and worn round the waist.

Kaniyans worship the sun, moon, and planets beside their gods, Siva, Vishnu, and Ganesa. Each day of the week has its special planet, and the morning worship is addressed to the planet of the day.

A favourite phrase of the sorcerer is : “ There is an evil influence round you, which I can remove for — rupees.” An astrologer once came to my bungalow in Mysore, and told me that there was an evil influence near me which he could remove for thirty-five rupees. I replied that the only evil influence near me was himself, and that I could remove him more cheaply than that. At the door the man turned and asked me for a bottle of whisky, in spite of the fact that he was wearing a Brahman thread. When I reminded him that a Brahman could not drink whisky, he told me he wanted it for a friend.

The Kaniyans are intelligent, and well-versed in Sanskrit and Malayalam. They strenuously object to manual labour, and depend for a living on the fruits of their hereditary profession. They are conservative, and do not regard Western education very highly. The men wear the triple marks of Siva on their foreheads, while the women draw the vermilion line through the parting of their hair and put on as many ornaments as they can afford. Kaniyans wear the orthodox costume of Malabar ; the men having the usual *dhotie*. Flesh and fish are forbidden them as food, but in certain families meat is eaten occasionally. They observe the ceremonies of the high-caste Hindus. They have food-giving and name-bestowing rites ; also, the rite for the exorcism of evil spirits on the ninth day after the birth of a child.

A Kaniyan boy's education begins in the seventh year. When he is sixteen the ceremony of initiation is performed,

and it is then that he begins his studies of astrology and witchcraft. He must abstain from flesh and liquors, and worship the tutelary god of the caste.

During the *mandalam* (forty days), from the fourteenth of November until the twenty-fifth of December, the senior members of the family purify themselves and do *pujas* (prayers and gestures) before all the gods. The gods number not less than forty-two, and the worshippers during their oblations offer each one boiled rice and cocoanuts. On the fortieth day the worship lasts for the twenty-four hours continuously.

Ancestors are worshipped on nights of the new moon, and during pestilential epidemics blood sacrifices are offered to the gods. These people observe the *sakta*. After a corpse is burned, the ashes are deposited under water, and in memory of the dead an oblation of water is offered to the new moon.

## CHAPTER XIX

### DANCING GIRLS

**T**HE Dancing Girls have their own caste. These girls are now nothing but prostitutes of various grades. They are no longer under the protection, openly, of temples, and the money they earn by dancing, and from the sale of their bodies, is supposed to be their own to dispose of as they wish. The fact is, however, that some hanger-on, or the priest if he demands it, usually gets the money. The girls are engaged to dance at respectable weddings, and at private entertainments.

Less than a year ago I attended in Bangalore the wedding of an educated Brahman, who had employed the girls to dance every day during the ceremony, which lasted for more than two weeks. The day I attended, four of the girls, accompanied by two old haridans and four musicians, wore beautiful gold-bordered *saris*, held in place by wide gold belts. They had strings of little bells on their ankles, which tinkled in time with the music, while their necks, arms, and ears were loaded with real diamonds and other precious stones.

These dancers moved their feet but little, using mostly their arms and necks. They could dislocate their necks, and turn their heads round like parrots; a movement that no Western dancer, who goes to India to study Oriental dancing, can ever hope to copy. The secret is known only to the Indian trainer, and the girl must learn it when she is a mere baby. The movement of the fingers is another Eastern art which no Western imitator can achieve. The fingers of dancing girls seem to have no bones, but drift and float about like long-petalled flowers. The girls in Bangalore could lay their thumbs back along their wrists, as if they were fastened there. This last is called the Pataka gesture, and it is taken from Brahma. The Pataka is the hand of force, and indicates assurance. The Pataka gesture is employed in the cosmic dance of Siva, and

other Pataka gestures are with the fingers reaching upward to the gods or pointing downwards to the lower worlds. If the feet move in unison with these gestures, it indicates amorous expression.

The *ardha-chandra* (half-moon) gesture is formed with both hands, the right upward and the left downward. It is the gesture of hope and fearlessness, and only those who are spiritually free should use it. It is characteristic of Siva, and when the *ardha-chandra* hand spreads out in the form of a crescent, it carries fire and is the symbol of destruction. Crossed, with the palms inward, the *ardha-chandra* is the bird of Vishnu.

The *tripataka* is a three-fingered pose. It originates with Siva, and indicates the descent of the gods. It is also the weapon symbol, signifying the axe or the thunderbolt.

The *sirpa-sirsa* originates with Vishnu, and there the palm of the hand is hollowed, with the fingers curved to represent a cobra's head. This gesture is used for waving *arati* (keeping off the evil eye), and for a water-offering at twilight. *Sirpa-sirsa* hands joined together at the sides are used for receiving an offering.

The *alapadma* hand represents a lotus, fully blown. The fingers are separated and slightly bent, the little finger straighter than the others. This is the symbol of Krishna.

The *hamsasya* is the swan hand. The thumb and forefinger are joined, and the other fingers separated and curved. This gesture represents instruction and wisdom.

The *kataka*, with the first and middle finger joined to the thumb, indicates inquiry, and is used for holding a necklace or a garland of flowers.

The *kartari-mukha* is made by joining the forefingers and little fingers, with the rest of the hand outspread. This originates with Vishnu, and shows separation and death.

The *sikhara* is an erotic gesture, an invitation to intercourse, and belongs to Siva. The fingers are closed into the palm, and the thumb is upstanding.

The *kapittha* (elephant hand) is formed by curving the forefinger over the thumb. It originates with Lakshmi, and is used for holding a veil, offering incense, or milking a cow. The *gaja* (elephant trunk) is another erotic gesture, and



THE DANCE OF SIVA





signifies the end of sex intercourse. It is one of Siva's gestures. The left arm is swung across the body to the right, with the hand drooping.

The *suchi* (pointing finger) is the gesture of surprise. In it the finger is supposed to turn the wheel of time. This gesture, if made with the eyes partly closed, is an amorous invitation.

The *bhramara* (bee) indicates any flying creature. The thumb and forefinger are curved downwards, and joined to the second finger. It belongs to Vishnu.

The dancing girls keep their palms toward the spectators whenever possible, and the wrist is the pivot for the movement of the hands in any direction. The elbows are also very expressive. Every gesture has a meaning, and every dance tells a story. Sometimes the dancer sings the story as she dances. If she does not sing it she has it definitely in mind, and tries with gestures and movements of her body and eyes to express it.

There are nine fundamental movements of the head, and several variations to each movement. There is the pose of inertia, when the head is held level, and which indicates serenity and the clearing of the mind of distractions. The head nodded from side to side indicates astonishment, and with this movement the neck should be stretched and the eyebrows raised. When the head is nodded slowly, with dilated pupils, eyelids fluttering and contracted brows, cruelty is indicated. Erotic moods are indicated by first drooping the head, then rolling it from side to side with a rapturous expression in the eyes. The head moved in a circle indicates passion, excitement and obsession, while the half-moon swing of the head indicates enchantment.

The understanding must be perfect between the dancer and the musicians. Contrary to Western dance music, that of the Hindus has no climaxes to be reached, and in it nothing breaks the gentle flow of the rhythm. The dancer has no music to interpret, and is only concerned with her story. Sometimes the words of her story are indecent ; but the canons of her art have been fixed in the dim past, to express the rhythm of nature's activity, devotion to the gods and creative energy, and sex inevitably must enter this latter rhythm. She is taught that dancing has a vitality of expression not inferior to music.

In the West the dissociation of art and the Church has left a chasm which neither can bridge. Whatever lofty idealism art reaches, it is always judged as art alone, and is never linked with a spiritual thought which might have inspired it. In the East art and devotion are one and the same. It would be impossible for the West to make the dance other than theatrical, for the restlessness of cities demands amusement and diversion, and seeks to achieve forgetfulness in spectacular thrill. When Eastern dances are taken to the West it is for the sake of novelty and amusement, and consequently at once a false note is struck. The authenticity of the dance is lost ; Indian dancing being essentially a rite, a symbol of the race spirit.

The dance has been one of the chief forms of religious expression in India since the beginning of her history. The earliest Vedic scripture mentions the divine singers, the dancing nymphs, and the players of musical instruments, and chants to the various gods were accompanied by dancing. Siva was the first dancer, and his the dance of creation, the ecstasy of motion, the preservation and destruction of cosmic energy. Krishna danced and played his flute, while women, overcome by his music and his dancing, left home and husband to follow him. Lakshmi, the Hindu Venus, the goddess who was born from a lotus and the consort of Vishnu, was the dancer of heaven. Arrayed with anklets and bells she won the acclaim of the heavenly court and taught the *apsaras* (the heavenly nymphs) to dance. The eight energies were the *saktis* of Indra's court, before they degenerated into the disgusting spectacles they are to-day.

The early Hindus spiritualized their emotions. Everything emanated from one divine source, namely from God. In ancient India dancing and music were supposed to regulate the emotions, to winnow from them any chaff which did not originate in the spiritual idea. Brahma, the creator, entered into divine meditation and brought forth the arts of music, dancing, and drama. His *nayaka* (dancing master) had a character without blemish, and only people who were without vanity and clean of mind were permitted to witness the dance.

The emotions were classified as *sringara*, the sex emotion, which lies at the heart of creation ; *vir*, heroism ; *karuna*, compassion ; *adbhuta*, wonder ; *hasya*, laughter ; *bhayanaka*,

fear ; *bibhatsa*, the grotesque ; *raudra*, the terrible ; *shanti*, peace ; *dasya*, devotion ; *sakhya*, friendship ; *vatsalya*, paternal feeling ; *madhura*, romance. And all these have their symbols in the dance.

Kama, the Indian Eros, represents awakening and desire, and his is the dance of spring, the dance of love. In his dance he uses five arrows to pierce the five senses.

The dance of Durga signifies the mother aspect, and is the harvest dance, the dance of fulfilment. An old Indian legend relates that when the saint Rishabha Deva saw a dance performed by Nilanjasa, a woman dancer in the service of the god Indra, he lost all desire for the world and retired to *Kailasa* (Siva's heaven) to meditate upon eternal bliss.

Sri Chaitanya, a famous dancer of the sixteenth century, used to go about singing hymns in the praise of Krishna, and, continually thinking of the god, he was moved to execute some of the most beautiful dances the East has ever seen. Many who witnessed his performance became his pupils and devotees.

Dancing is divided into two types, known as Tandava and Lasya. Tandava is the expression of intense excitement and characterizes cosmic activity, divine and heroic. The conquest of evil and the attainment of bliss are moods of the Tandava. The *prekshani* mood of Tandava is a movement of the limbs without facial expression, and might be compared to the *Noh* dance of Japan, which is an Eastern adaptation of the masque dance of early Greece. Siva expresses himself in the Tandava ; of which his dance of joy, his evening dance, his dance to slay evil and ignorance, his dances with his two consorts, Uma and Gauri, and his dance of death in the burning-ground, signifying the soul's release from illusion, are all phases. The dance of Kali (one of Siva's wives), as the slayer of demons with garlands of skulls and death-dealing weapons, also belongs to the Tandava, as does the dance of Krishna, which expresses ecstatic and supreme joy.

*Lasya* is the mood of desire, and in this movement the expression is amorous and the gestures inviting. It is the dance of the woman before her lover.

The buffoon dance has its place in Hindu ritual, and is called the *rudushaka*.

The dance Macabre is known as the *bhringi*, and Siva's skeleton attendant dances it in the burning-ground.

Hindu art, having originated with the gods, was taught to mortals by the *rishis* (sages). The attainment of spiritual power is associated with certain postures of the body capable of invoking inner vision, and Yoga was the growth of the early dance rituals.

The Nautch dance and the Manipuri dance of Bengal have been influenced by the Moghul and later schools. In these dances more attention is paid to the stepping of the measure than to the hand and arm gestures. The Indians are the only dancers who can be graceful on the flat of the foot, and so flexible are their feet, they convey the impression of dancing on the toes. The costume of the Nautch has taken on something of Western influence, the skirt being very wide and sewn with glittering spangles. Transparent veils are waved to create an effect.

The Ajanta dance has toe movement, and in this it differs from most of the dances in India. It is the dance usually copied by Western devotees, and the dance of attraction is a favourite phase of it. This movement seeks to disturb the meditations of Lord Buddha, and betray him to the emotions. There are puzzling contrasts in the Ajanta, which are intended to portray good and evil. There is much head movement, and the arms are waved and folded in a series of gestures.

Inspired by the Hindu dances and Western ideas, the Indians have evolved a new style of dancing. There is a snake dance, a peacock dance, a sword dance, and many others. In the peacock dance, which I watched in Bengal, powder was spread on the floor and the dancer, when her dance was finished, had traced the movements of the peacock in the powder. This dance entirely depends upon the foot movement, and lacks the expression or the message of the classical dance.

In south India alone have the original dances been preserved. The temple dance of the Devadasi is seen only in the south, and watching it we might be attending the Dionysia of Greece, when the whole country was in a state of sanctity, under taboo, or in the grip of heroic drama. We see Clytemnestra waiting to slay Agamemnon as he returns from Troy ; the hate of Medea and the slaying of her children ;

the love of Phædra for Hippolytos. We see the vestal virgins tending their god—worshipping him, singing to him, dancing for his delight. We see the pure, natural dance of joy, with its roots in the ritual; the only dance that in the true meaning of the word can be called classic.

The ancient people knew that before you could perform a rite, something must be actually done. You could not content yourself in merely thinking about anything. Here they called on the law of magic, and perhaps it is a law, one of the fundamental laws of the universe. We, however, have allowed it to become the weapon of charlatans.

All ancient religions were founded upon such a law—namely on formula, chants, and cadence; as might we say, on an enchantment produced by voice and sounds. There was not enough faith behind the desire for rain to make corn to grow, or to cause the soul to pass unhampered from the body. Accordingly, the fall of the rain, the sowing of the seed, the soul's release, all had to be danced. The mind required to be impressed by the movement of the body, in the same way that to-day the mind is impressed by prayers and services.

The ancient people worked themselves up with pantomime, as we work ourselves up with prayers and poetry. Their war dance and hunting dance stood in the place of our prayers. They occurred before the event, when something was desired, and again when something was finished or fulfilled.

The dances were performed at fixed times, until they became rites, and were closely associated in the mind with the object for which they came into being. The corn dance was associated with corn, the rain dance with rain, and one was seen in terms of the other. We must not forget that if our own forms are more practical, they are nevertheless ritual; for it is across the bridge of ritual we must pass to religion, science, art, or anything that needs a formula.

The ecstasy and triumph in Siva's dance of creation were founded, no doubt, upon an expression of pure joy which had nothing to do with pleasure. The dance of pleasure came later. More and more sensuality entered into the dance with each succeeding generation, until it became the dance of lust, the present disgusting *sakta*.

The cessation of the Hindu dances (with the exception of the *sakta*) would be a great loss to art. The filthy words of some of the songs could be changed without weakening the stories they tell.

### KAIKOLAN

The Kaikolan caste of weavers has over seventy divisions, but many of them have abandoned their hereditary employment as weavers and become cart drivers and tillers of the soil. The division of the caste living about Coimbatore plys its ancient trade mostly in the jails.

One division of this caste is the sub-caste of the dancing girls. Many Kaikolans will tell you that the dancing girls do not belong to their caste; none the less, in most of the Kaikolan families one of the girls becomes a dancer. These people do not like it said that the girl is dedicated to the temple service. In such cases the rule is that so long as the descendants of the girl continue in the profession, no other girl is dedicated from the original family.

Kaikolan girls can still marry the temple gods if they desire. All that is necessary for such rarefied conjugal bliss, is for the priest to tie the *tali* on the girl's neck. This is done because the girl is supposed to have some choice in the matter. In former times she was dedicated to the temple before she reached puberty; to-day she is not required to live in the temple quarters, but may live outside with women who were dancing girls until their looks and agility deserted them. She is taught music and dancing by a master known as the *Nattuvan*. Sometimes she is instructed in music by a Brahman Bhagavathans.

At the *tali*-tying ceremony the girl stands on a heap of unhusked rice, with two other dancers who hold a cloth before her face. The *Nattuvan*, who is seated behind her, grasps her legs and moves them in time with the music. Her relatives and friends are then entertained with food and music. This occurs in the morning.

In the evening the girl is taken to the temple and presents the idol with a garland of flowers or, if she can afford it, with a necklace. After decorating the idol she sits facing it, while the priest takes the *tali* from where it has been lying in front of the god and ties it on the girl's neck. In this

case the *tali* (usually a golden disc) is surrounded with black beads. Flowers and betel-nut are then distributed among those present, and the girl is taken home.

Later, she goes through the form of a nuptial ceremony. On this occasion her uncle ties a gold band on her forehead, and a Brahman priest recites the *mantrams* and lights the sacred fire. There is an actual nuptial rite which follows the rehearsal. A high-caste Brahman is invited to represent the god, and before he seduces the girl he recites *mantrams* in front of the god.

The girls are supposed to accept only the favour of the Brahmans ; but the parsimonious attitude of these superior beings, and the present economic conditions, have rendered them less selective.

When a dancing girl dies, her body is covered with a new cloth which has been placed for a while on the idol, and flowers and rice are supplied from the temple. No pollution is observed since the god was her husband.

#### DEVA-DASIS

Dasis, or Deva-dasis (handmaidens of the gods), are dancing girls once attached to the temples, but living now by practising the oldest profession. They have their own caste, which has its own customs, councils, and laws of inheritance. Dasis, dedicated to the temple, are married to the god or to a sword, and receive their marriage badge. Members are recruited by admission and by purchase. The profession is not held in the consideration it once enjoyed, but it retains a very definite position in the Hindu religion. The organization has still certain temple duties, which are discharged occasionally ; such as fanning the idol, waving the sacred light (*kumbarti*), and sometimes dancing when the god is carried in procession.

There are two divisions of the Dasis : the Valangai, or right hand, and the Idangai, or left hand. The former will have nothing to do with artisans, and refuse to dance in their houses ; the latter is not so particular. Neither division, however, will sell themselves to men of the lowest castes. In the Oriya country the Dasi caste is not connected with the temples in any way, and its girls neither marry the god nor receive the marriage badge.



Dancing girls sometimes amass considerable fortunes, which frequently they devote to piety or to something which will commemorate their caste. Indian bridges and other public works frequently owe their existence to these girls, and the large tank at Channarayapatna in Mysore state was built by two dancing girls.

In the Kurnool district, when the only issue of a family is a female, the family becomes extinct if she marries. To prevent this, she is dedicated as a Dasi, and continues to belong to her father's sept. If any male issue is born to her, it will also belong to her father. In such case the girl is not married to the idol, but is tied on an auspicious day to a lamp. She is released by the man who is to accept her first favours. She becomes a prostitute, and her children do not marry into orthodox families. Sometimes a wealthy Indian bears the expenses of the lamp ceremony, and receives her first favours.

The principal duties of the dancing girls are those belonging to the temple to which she was dedicated. No girl can be dedicated to a temple after she has reached puberty. Many women join the girls by arrangement, but they do not belong to the temples. Applications for the presentation of a girl to the temple are made to the temple authorities by a senior dancing girl. Girls are usually presented to the caste between six and eight years of age, and after formal investigations have been made the parents of the girl must pay the expenses of the ceremony and present something to the temple. If the girl is accepted she is taken to the inner sanctuary of the temple, where she sits facing the deity. The priest then makes the fire and performs the marriage ceremony. A mimic marriage, representing Siva marrying Parvati, sometimes precedes the girl's marriage to the god. After the marriage the girl is taken to her father's house, where her marriage is celebrated for two or three days. A cocoanut is rolled back and forth between the bride and an elderly Dasi dressed in male attire to act the part of bridegroom.

If a girl is dedicated to a temple without consulting the Dasis who have previously been dedicated, a hue-and-cry is raised. Sometimes the Dasis take the case into court (the average Hindu woman does not care to invoke litigation, but the dancing girl is not so particular), and try to have the application of the proposed girl suspended until she and her

family are investigated. This does not occur in the case of an ordinary dancing girl, who joins the Dasis to become a prostitute.

The home of the dancing girl is the only place in India where the birth of a male child is not an occasion for rejoicing. The boys born to the dancing girls sometimes remain in the caste as musicians, playing for the women to dance. Others marry some girl who is too plain to be a success in the profession. While others, again, drift out of the caste, pretending to belong to some other caste and trying to find an occupation other than that of musician. Daughters are brought up to follow the profession, and are taught dancing, singing, and the arts of dressing and make-up.

Indian music is perhaps the oldest in the world, and the Dasi caste is the repository for much of it.

The Dasis are the only unmarried women, according to Hindu law, who are allowed to adopt children, and they frequently adopt a girl for the profession. The adoption is rather a lengthy undertaking. Application is first made to the temple authorities ; then, when the sanction of the authorities is obtained, all parties concerned meet at the home of the girl who is considering the adoption, and a document is drawn up and signed ; finally, the adopted girl goes through the marriage rite, and is handed over to the music teacher for training.

When a dancing woman becomes too old, or too diseased, for the profession she applies to the temple for permission to remove her ear-rings. After she has formally handed over her ornaments, which are returned to her, she becomes an old mother and is supposed to lead a life of retirement. She may still receive a small income from the temple to which she was dedicated. In spite of the fact that girls are not connected with the temples in the same way as formerly, the retiring Dasis still receive a stipend from the temples.

When a priest dies, the dancing girl whom he married vicariously prepares the tumeric powder which is dusted over his corpse. She also observes the anniversaries of his death. It is said that in former times dancing girls, at the commencement of their career, used to sleep three nights in the inner shrine of the Koppesvara temple in the Godavari district, so as to be embraced by the god.

At the beginning of the last century there were a hundred dancing girls attached to the temple at Conjeeveram, who were faithful to the deities in forbidding any familiarity with infidels.

About three years ago I arranged to have a group of girls dance at the temple in Conjeeveram, the temple of Ekambarah Swami, the god of a single garment. They danced in the hall of a hundred pillars, a fine old structure in the temple courtyard. They were dressed in gaudy *saris*, with as much jewellery as their frail little bodies could support. Their necks, breasts, hips, arms, fingers, ankles, and toes were fairly plastered with jewels, most of which were imitation. Their faces were heavily painted, and their eyes were touched up with kohol. Old hags and several ragged musicians accompanied them, and the former no doubt had been Nautch girls once. The hags' mouths were stained with betel, and they talked rapidly to the dancers in highly-pitched, unpleasant voices.

The girls danced slowly, rhythmically, swaying their bodies from side to side and dislocating their necks. The hags, meanwhile, uttered a series of grunts, in time with the music. A girl, who could not have been more than twelve years old, knelt before me, making the erotic gestures and singing a filthy Tamil song. When she had finished the song she stood up, the others joined her, and the dance became very excited. The musicians put down their instruments, and one old hag took up a conch shell and blew in it. The wail of the shell seemed to madden the girls, and they started a wild song which left little to the imagination.

As I watched and listened, I could feel modernity slip away—back to the days hidden behind the centuries. In this hall of a hundred pillars, with its stone columns, its mythological animals, its stone chains whose links were fastened together by some dead and forgotten skill, girls danced to awaken the senses. Greece was not yet, Rome was not yet; nothing

blurred the mind but the worship of sex, in that scene conjured from the past. The girls stopped dancing, and held out their hands for money. I had already paid the priest for putting on the performance, but we gave the girls some backsheesh and a box of cigarettes.

I believe that Conjeeveram is one of the temples which still pay an allowance to the Dasis out of the temple income. Mackenzie says in his manuscripts: "The insigne of courtesans, according to the Conjeeveram records, is a cupid; that of a Christian, a curry-comb."

## CHAPTER XX

### DOMESTIC SERVANTS

#### BEARERS

**T**HERE are few countries left in the world where one can obtain good domestic servants at a cost making it convenient to keep them. In this respect India, where formerly good servants could be got at a reasonable price, is rapidly changing. Each time one returns to the country, it becomes more and more difficult for the average salaried European to get together a really satisfactory staff for anything resembling the former expenditure. Servants, like the rest of us, have felt the economic pressure, and while their necessities are few compared with those of "master," an increase in wages has been demanded. Especially is this so in the larger Indian cities.

Much can be said for, and against, the Indian servant. I have employed men who were more honest, sincere, and trustworthy than any European servant I have known. I have employed others who could give the New York gangsters tips on the way to handle a situation. Generally speaking, the Indian servant's faults are childish, and often it is better to think of him as a child and treat him accordingly.

If there is one servant I really dislike, it is the ayah. Many memsahibs have told me about their "treasures." "Such a nice ayah, you know, I can leave the children with her without the slightest worry." My own experiences with ayahs in my home has been unfortunate, and they have been without exception lying, dirty wretches, whom I was eager to put out of the house.

No temptation should be left in the way of Indian servants. There are certain things which they seem unable to resist. No face cream, for example, ever seems sacred to the Indian boy. His hair and face must be continually oiled, and ordinary brilliantine does not seem to his liking when he has

access to the memsahib's special brand. This question cropped up at dinner one night, and a chemist friend of mine solved the difficulty for us with an itch-powder which was mixed with a pot of some popular make. Four days were sufficient to unmask the culprit, who was discharged with a facial rash and no backsheesh.

To avoid that nasty feeling of being spied upon in your bath, or while dressing, it is necessary to have all pcepholes carefully plugged. And instead of allowing their servants to walk the house barefooted, some mistresses insist on the servants wearing squeaky-soled shoes. This certainly avoids an Indian's irritating habit of creeping up to you, and standing at your back awaiting orders.

Whenever I reprimanded one temporary bearer for negligence in supervising the dusting he always retaliated the following morning by putting finger-nail parings in my bath. What particular superstition of the boy's was thus served I could never discover. It did not follow the usual magic clap-trap, in which it is necessary to obtain the victim's nail parings for witches to concentrate upon.

Once, while in south India, I received a telegram asking me to meet and look after a friend's wife, who was coming from Calcutta by train. I shall never forget the shock I received at the station when I saw the change in this young woman. From the lively, happy-go-lucky bride whom I remembered, she had become a pale and nervous wreck, and she was in such a jumpy condition that she exclaimed: "What's that!" at every sound. A few days later she told us her story, which incidentally is yet another example, much nearer home, of the dangerous and disgusting sex-hysteria with which India is riddled.

Quite by accident, apparently, my friend's wife had gone into the pantry at her home, and found her little girl, a child of four, sitting on the bearer's knee. The man had taken off the child's drawers, and was teaching her to masturbate. The mother, very naturally, lost her head and rushed for her husband's revolver which was in her bureau. The weapon's magazine was fully loaded, and all she had to do was to slip the safety-catch and pull the trigger. Her action was so quick that the bearer had hardly taken ten steps down the servants' stairs before a bullet in the shoulder stopped him.

Luckily, in one sense, the woman then collapsed or very probably she would have killed her bearer. She told me that she had murder in her heart, and in fact she had come to us for rest and to be out of Calcutta until the scandal blew over.

Another of my friends in south India had a much happier experience with her bearer. For thirty-five years her husband had been the victim of eczema, and had spent unavailingly a small fortune on doctors and cures. One day, however, when she was having tea alone in the compound, her bearer said to her : " Memsahib, I can cure master." With a smile she told the man she was sure he could not succeed where all the doctors had failed. Nevertheless, the servant quietly persisted in his assertion, and actually produced a small phial containing some thickish red fluid. A fresh crop of sores on her husband's body the following morning reminded the memsahib of the phial the boy had given her, and more in desperation than in any belief in the efficacy of the remedy, she applied the contents of the bottle to the new eruption. To her amazement the sores not only healed, but they left behind no scar on the skin. For some time my friend was unable to get the bearer to tell her how his medicine was prepared, and it was always he and the *maali* (gardener) who went off together to get fresh supplies. During the early stages of the treatment it seemed that supplies could be obtained within her own compound, but later the men had to go farther afield. Like a wise woman, however, since all was going well, she concealed her curiosity, and paid the bearer well for his trouble. Ultimately, it turned out to be blood from the throat of the Agamidæ lizard which was providing the so magical cure. When I last heard from my friends they were making a leisurely trip round the world. Knowing my interest in the matter it was specially mentioned in a letter that no return of the eczema had occurred.

#### AYAHS

A friend once told me that the Indian ayah was the invention of the devil. I would rather say that she is the result of devilish practices forced upon her by her religion, her family, her utter state of subjection, and the threat of any number of hangers-on who await a share of her meagre pittance.

Of necessity, she is perverse and unscrupulous. She is usually given to petty thieving, and her habit is to lie, even if the truth would benefit her. She can seldom be trusted to behave out of the sight and hearing of her memsahib. Foreign mothers usually hand their children over to these women, for some obscure reason which no sensible person can understand. One might imagine that the entire relief from household cares, with the exception of directing the staff, would give a woman the opportunity to look after her children, but this is not the case. The lack of ambition, and the tendency to drift, is put down to the climate and the life that in India one must inevitably lead. Actually, however, it is nothing more or less than a system proceeding on tradition. It has always been the custom to hand over children to ayahs, and condemn the climate whether of the plains, the hills, or the near Himalayan snows. I am speaking, of course, of the general tendency in this respect.

It is hopeless to think of changing the character of these ayahs, or indeed of any Indian, by legislation. But it is obvious that they in no way resemble the Australians or Canadians, with whom they are for ever comparing themselves in their insistent candidature for the British Empire.

A friend once visited me in Madras, bringing with her her little girl, aged three, and the child's ayah. My friend assured me that her ayah was honest; that she left all sorts of articles about, and the woman had never stolen anything. She insisted, in fact, that her particular ayah was a treasure, and had never taken so much as a pocket-handkerchief. For my part, in view of my own servants' habits of petty thieving, I asked my friend to be careful of her possessions. My advice, however, went unheeded; and among other things my visitor had the habit of emptying her purse of the silver, and making a little pile of it on the dressing-table.

Then one day she came to me and said that a pile of twelve rupees was missing. I told her that she really deserved to lose her money, and having emphasized so strongly her own servants' honesty, it was only natural that she suspected the perfidy of mine. I had, therefore, each member of my staff up and questioned them, but as was only to be expected they all denied any knowledge of the vanished money. Indeed, I knew what their answers would be before I questioned them.



My friend's ayah, owing to her previous reputation, was not examined. Actually, I suspected my cook, who was in the habit of slipping out to the toddy shop two or three times a day. Accordingly, I went to the toddy shop and asked the old reprobate managing it if my cook had given him any money to keep for him. But this, again, was a quite useless move on my part, since the man would have lied if such had been the case.

It was at the end of the day, during that moment of amber dusk which is the brief prelude of Indian night, that my gardener came to me and asked me if I had noticed anything out of the ordinary in the way my friend's ayah walked. I noticed the woman's movements then, and certainly there was something peculiar about them. When she tried to squat down on the floor, as the Indian women do, she lowered herself with difficulty. At first I thought she was in pain, and wondered if possibly she had brought cholera, or dysentery, or some other frightful thing into my house. On questioning the woman, she looked at me with terrified eyes and, hanging her head, refused to give me any answer. With that, I became suspicious at once, as no Indian servant rejects the offer of help if he or she is in trouble. On the contrary, their way is to throw themselves on your pity, and fairly to wallow in woe.

Calling my friend I managed to convince her after some argument that the ayah should be searched, and she took the woman into her room and closed the door. Some time later a very subdued memsahib, her eyes fairly protruding with astonishment and her hands shaking, collapsed into a chair in her dressing-room. "I cannot believe it, I cannot believe it," was all she could say for some time. Presently, between further outbursts of astonishment, she told me what had transpired. The ayah had taken the money and secreted it in her vagina. As coin after coin had come to light, the woman kept calling down curses on a man called Din. She relegated the man's ancestors to a worse abode than Dante's inferno, and all possible filth and disease was invoked to halt the progress of his descendants. After her outburst, she had told her story with the usual resignation of her class when actually trapped.

It is seldom that a Hindu woman, however perverse and

lost to all ideas of decency, will ignore the rules of her caste, but this ayah was an exception. She had been living with a fakir who had turned out to be a Khoolsurrya. The Khoolsurryas belong to the thugs of Hindustan, are Mohammedans and makers of false money, and are organized under the tribe name of Chapparbands (roof builders). How the name became perverted, and came to describe a class of criminals, I have no idea. The Khoolsurryas go about the country palming off false currency in various ways for genuine coin. Sometimes they pose as fakirs. They camp near a stream, which helps them in their coining, and also acts as a cache for moulds and other articles of the trade if they are discovered. They make their money with finely powdered earth called shedoo. This earth, while wet, is imprinted with a genuine coin and baked in embers. When the earth has hardened, the coin is slipped out of the mould with a knife. The two earthen halves are then joined together with some sort of paste, a small hole is bored on one side, and into this opening melted tin is poured. The coin is finally washed in a solution of tin, and rubbed over with dirt and scratched to give it the appearance of old money.

When a Chapparband sells his merchandise, it is usually necessary for him to return some change to the purchaser, and this change is the false money. If danger is apprehended, he will conceal the money in his rectum. According to surgeons' statements, given in criminal reports, many Chapparbands have enlarged the rectum to an unbelievable extent, and cases on record show that from seven to nine rupees have been concealed there.

My friend's ayah was not turned over to the police. She was permitted to leave immediately she had finished her story, and went out of the compound muttering curses on her Mohammedan lover.

It is seldom that the ayahs are as well versed in the fine art of thieving as the one I have just mentioned. Usually they content themselves with taking the memsahib's stockings and handkerchiefs, or bits of lace and cloth. Often they are ox-like creatures, who pass in and out of existence like dumb animals. With the exception of their caste superstitions, they seem to know nothing whatever. This latter type can cause more serious harm, however, than her more depraved sister, since in her dumb way, and meaning to be kind, she frequently

exposes her little charge to all sorts of maladies. A baby sucking a dirty toy which has just been on the ground ; or stuffing coppers into his mouth that have just come from a corner of the ayah's dirty *sari*, where they were tied into a piece of the cloth ; or having his nose blown on the corner of the ayah's garment which but a moment ago held the coppers, are frequent and sickening sights in India.

While crossing the Midan of Calcutta one day, I saw a friend's little girl playing in the sun without her topee. She had flung her helmet on the ground, while she romped about with other children. Her ayah, meanwhile, with a number of others of her ilk, was sitting on the ground gossiping and chewing betel-nut. I told the child to put her hat on, and to keep it on, but I had no means of knowing how long she had been uncovered, and that evening the little one had a serious sunstroke. Later, when her mother told me about it, she was strong in praise of the child's ayah, who, " poor distressed thing," not knowing what else to do, had made an offering to her god for the child's recovery.

### Cooks

Indian architects have relegated the art of cooking to any odd corner of the compound where eighty square feet of space can be spared, and where it will be screened from the gaze of the inquisitive or the passing shadow of an Untouchable. Into this small space, with the only opening that of the door, is crowded a bench of mud bricks with three holes—the primitive stove, a table, and a pitcher of water. The Indian architect, however, has to bear in mind two things. His house must be suitable for European or Indian occupation, and at the same time must make provision for the rigidity of caste laws as regards the preparation of food without pollution. Dirt is not pollution to the Indian mind, but the mere shadow of an Untouchable falling on food at any time is enough to warrant its destruction.

The Hindu wife frequently prepares the food for her lord, and she serves him while he eats. She is often content to have the scraps which are left on his plate as her share of the meal. If she is a good orthodox person, she fasts on Tuesdays for her husband's longevity and on Fridays to assure her own fruitfulness.

When the house is occupied by a European, the cook is expected to prepare anything, from the simple daily meals for the family to the elaborate *burra-khana*<sup>1</sup> of the gala night. On occasion, when unexpected guests who have no terminal facilities arrive, he will stretch a meal for two into a repast for four or five, watering the soup, making fish out of fowl, and contriving chicken cutlets out of mutton. Assisted by his *matie*, the Indian cook carries on cheerfully and efficiently if left alone and not fussed. Of the innumerable staff of servants he is the most valuable, and often works under the greatest difficulties. To obtain a good cook, especially in the country districts, is an endurance test of trials and dismissals. But when one is finally found, he is usually worth keeping.

In my own experience, for a month we struggled with the bad and indifferent. One cook we had was discharged because he persisted in talking to us with his hands behind his back, which is the Hindu gesture of contempt. The man thought we were new to the country, and that we would not understand. And then for a year we lived in peace and comfort, until a forced visit to Europe interrupted our tranquillity.

On our return an Indian, who had been evidently out of work for some time, appeared in the compound one morning. He said he was a cook, and produced an old certificate in which it was stated that he had worked for a planter on a tea estate. This, however, meant little or nothing, since servants' certificates can be hired for a nominal fee. The Indian then claimed to be a mission convert, and insisted that his wife should be taken on as an ayah. As we did not require an ayah, the wife consented to work as a cook's *matie*, whose duties are to pare the vegetables and wash-up.

The first meal, that same evening, was a success, and from a workless vagrant the man soon became a clean and intelligent servant. Where he had learned his craft I did not enquire, nor as to some of his methods of work. But when called upon to prepare a guest dinner for race days, all his vegetables were served in the moulds of horses, and on the occasion of the Maharaja's birthday, ice-cream appeared in the form of an elephant, with toes picked out in angelica, tusks of barley sugar and cherry eyes. Moreover, not content with the market

<sup>1</sup> Banquet.

vegetables, he insisted on the gardener preparing a piece of ground near the kitchen, and there he raised several successful crops of potatoes, peas, and beans. His wife assisted him in looking after the vegetable patch.

In our compound there was a small shrine containing a cheap print of some terrible-looking god, before which the gardener and the sweeper used to prostrate themselves. Much to our surprise, then, we saw the cook late one night prostrating himself also in front of the picture. When I told him I thought that he was a Christian, he replied, "God is everywhere," and refused to answer any further questions. Although the mission chapel was only a few doors down the road, I never knew of his visiting it.

Later, in the small hours about two months before we were going away, I was awakened by what sounded like a person groaning in the room beneath. It seemed, indeed, as if someone was dying in terrible agony. I was unable to discover anything, however, and the groaning ceased some time after I had returned to bed. The next morning our cook's wife told us that she could not stay in the house another minute, as some terrible tragedy was sure to happen. With shaking body and terror-stricken eyes the woman blurted out, "Oh, Memsahib, terrible thing happen last night. He sit on roof and hoo, hoo very bad, very bad." She then flapped her arms to imitate the wings of a bird, and cupped her thumbs and fingers round her eyes like goggles. Our nocturnal visitor had been a hoot-owl, and such creature's ventriloquial powers are well known. The hooting of the owl is regarded as an omen throughout India; indeed, in the south there is a definite table which indicates what each hoot may portend. Always, after the hearing the hoot, some trouble is to be expected.

The misfortune in this instance did occur, but not until some three months later after we had left for Europe.

To hold a lien on cook's services, we gave to him for himself and wife half-pay for a year, and we also paid the rent of their little hut, which was a matter of a few rupees. On our return to the district the following year, we found the man absent from the hut, and a young slut of fourteen evidently great with child. The girl thought the cook was at the bazaar, and shortly after he appeared, exceedingly ragged and dirty. His eyes and

voice indicated the march of untreated syphilis, and he informed us that he had sent his old wife back to her village, and had married the girl we had just seen.

From friends, then, we pieced together the facts of the story. The pay we had left in the man's hands had been more money than he had ever before seen, and he had hidden it from his wife, meaning to content her with the current month's wages. That, however, did not answer, as the wife belonged to a sub-division of the Malayam caste, where women are the masters and inheritance descends through the matriarchate. Even in the sexual act these women take the upper position and are known as the umbrella. As a result, with the money he had hidden from his wife, the cook started drinking and visiting the prostitutes, until his disease could no longer be concealed. His wife thereupon divorced him by the simple caste ceremony of leaving a pot of water outside her door, and returned to her village.

With his money finished, the unhappy man had had to borrow 200 rupees for his marriage to the slut we had seen at his door, and this loan was raised on the strength of his certain re-engagement upon our return. In the circumstances, of course, such a thing was impossible, and I told him pretty forcibly what I thought about him and his filthy condition. My words, none the less, made no impression whatever. The man informed us sulkily that his complaint was nothing which would interfere with his work ; his father had had it, and also his grandfather, so why not himself.

The first stages of syphilis are not so noticeable in the Indian as they are in the European, and this fact has led certain casual observers to suppose that Indians have built up an immunity against this scourge. To correct this idea, one has but to study the hospital reports on infection and lunacy caused by the disease. Incidentally, I once discussed the point with an Indian doctor, who had left the field of medicine for the quicker road to notoriety of Labour politics, and the doctor instantly said that the matter embodied one of the fundamentals of the Hindu faith. The Hindu did not resist the disease, but created a mental state where the disease could make no progress. We dismissed the cook. A kind Providence took the care of his wife and unborn child out of his hands by refusing to allow them to survive the confinement.

But the *chetti* who had loaned him the 200 rupees did his best to induce us to pay.

It seems to make little difference what religion your servants profess when they are engaged. They will probably tell a European that they are Roman Catholic or Methodist converts, or they may boast of their conversion to Islam. But whichever it is, the fundamental influence of Hinduism remains. If they want to be nice, they are nice in a Hindu way ; and if they are nasty, Hindu methods are followed.

When cook wishes to be unpleasant, he will add powdered egg-shells to your food. Even powdered glass, a favourite Hindu ingredient, has been found in the curry dishes of mistresses who exercise too niggardly a control over cook's daily bazaar account. An Anglo-Indian acquaintance told me he was practically sure that his cook, with the aid of a fortune-teller, was trying to work spells on his daughter, because she had accused him of bringing in bad meat from the market.

A cook who professed to be a Roman Catholic, and gave his name as Anthony, worked for us in Bangalore. He used to delegate the preparation of Sunday morning breakfasts to his *matie*, and make his attendance at Mass the excuse to visit toddy shops. Suspecting this, I locked up the liquor in the house and pocketed the key. To obtain money for his toddy, a bright idea occurred to the cook, and he came in with garlands of jasmine to hang round our necks. This ceremony completed, an advance of ten rupees was asked to pay the midwife who had assisted the man's seventh son into the world the previous night. I advanced five, but foolishly forgot to collect it at the end of the month. Some five months later more garlands were presented, and another request for money was made. The excuse was the same, another son. While I was looking up the date of the previous advance, I asked the cook how many children he had. "I think I have eight," he replied. When he was told to get another excuse for his advance, as confinements did not come every five months, the man said : "Never mind, Master. Give me one rupee." I presume he could get no further credit from the toddy shop.

#### MAALIS (GARDENERS)

Space economy, except in the cities of Bombay and Calcutta, has not to be studied, and practically every house stands in

its own compound. The soil in most places is ideal for cultivating a garden, and with a little coaxing a bare compound can be made in a few months to flourish like the green bay tree. Moreover, the expense, in comparison with Europe, is infinitesimal. In a house we took in Mysore City during October, we had sufficient floral decorations for Christmas, and this in spite of the fact that the compound had to be dug over, and flower-beds planned and prepared.

The greatest difficulty was to induce the gardener to turn the earth at a sufficient depth to do any good. It was not laziness which deterred the man, but fear of releasing the *bhuts* under the soil. One of the coolies finally solved this difficulty to his satisfaction by sprinkling some yellow powder, which I believe was tumeric, wherever I insisted upon deep digging. The use of tumeric to appease the wrath of the *bhuts* was probably a local superstition.

Usually, for a small addition to his pay, the gardener will keep the dogs clean and on occasion milk a cow. But the milking is unwilling service, for the simple reason that no Indian considers a European (to his mind an Untouchable) a fit person to enjoy the pure product of his sacred animal.

Our gardener was on bad terms with the cook, and accused him of profiteering on the dogs' meat account. The gardener engaged to manage the matter much more cheaply, and for three months the dogs were magnificently served for one anna a day. Now our house was close to the hunt kennels, and it was understood that the contractor of the kennels provided the food. Wishing, therefore, to ascertain if the monthly money was really paid, I held up one settlement for the contractor to come and get it in person. It was then the cook's turn, and though he did not tell me the whole story, he let me know that one of the kennel lads had been turned out for stealing. The gardener and the lad, it seemed, had been robbing the kennels and sharing the money I paid for our dogs' meat. Knowing that I had discovered his dishonesty, the gardener took French leave, without even waiting for his wages.

The *maali* was a loss, as he was useful in many ways. He knew the therapeutic values of every tree and shrub in the compound, and a friend who visited us insisted that he had given her rheumatism great relief. He made her get up with



the dawn and meet him under a sacred fig tree (Artimaron, he called it), before the dew was off the grass. There, with a flat-edged stone, he struck the trunk of the tree at the height of his navel until the sap flowed, and then invited our friend to rub the sap well in over the location of the pain.

On another occasion the man took two days' leave to make the sacrifice of Mudivangal, and in his absence had persuaded the butler to water the plants for him. The curious point was that, for us, the butler would not even carry a jug of water, as that duty did not belong to his caste. At any rate, on this occasion the *maali* returned without a hair on his head or face, and looking like a plucked chicken. A few days later, while planting out a bed of dahlias, he told us the why and wherefore of his denuded condition. A poor family, who have little to give to the gods, will promise the hair of their child. The child is then brought up with this promise in mind, and the sacrifice is made. It is, however, a sacrifice where the poor feel that they can at least offer as much as the rich, and give prodigally of the hirsute offering.

This sacrifice is specially meritorious when made by a woman, who has to face her friends and relations shorn of the beauty she has nurtured and trained with so much care. What becomes of the hair is the secret of the Brahman priests, but in the temple of Palni, near Madura, and in the Tirupati temple, Madras, one can always see sufficient quantities to keep the European markets busy for years. Sleeping on a hair mattress in England, one cannot help casting one's mind back to the temples of India.

Another *maali*, whom we had in Madras, had no redeeming feature save that he was the landlord's watchman. He went with the lease, and the only privilege the tenant had was to pay his salary. I had been nursing some lilies which I wanted for the house, but when Easter Sunday morning came the pots were bare except for freshly-cut stalks. The only helpful suggestion in the matter was offered by the butler, who supposed that some child had wandered into the compound and picked them. Quite by chance we were taken by a friend to call that afternoon at a house some distance down the road. "What a glorious showing of lilies," someone remarked. "Yes," replied our hostess, "such a kind thought of our landlord."

Their landlord was also our own. For the sake of the tip he knew he was sure to get, the *maali* had presented my lilies in his master's name. He also knew that, when he was duly thanked, his Indian master, who knew nothing of the transaction, would merely bow and say nothing.

### DHOBIE (WASHERMAN)

In the average European household the weekly fight with the *dhobie* (washerman) is just as severe as the nightly squabble over cook's market account. By careful folding, and immaculate ironing, the *dhobie* endeavours to hide all rents or missing buttons from an inquisitive memsahib. New-comers and visitors soon fall into line with the system of old residents, and deduct small fines for damage done. It is, indeed, the only hope of preserving one's clothes.

Preserving, however, is a poor description, since the Indian method of washing is essentially destructive. For the expulsion of dirt no *dhobie* will ever use soap and hot water. From time immemorial he has taken the wash to some near-by river, where he sits on the bank while his coolies pound out the dirt by hurling the clothes against the smoothest stone they can find. After this treatment, the clothes are spread on the river bank to dry.

During the dry season the *dhobie* is often faced with quite long journeys to find running water suitable for washing. Stagnant water immediately produces *dhobie's* itch, a kind of dry eczema and one of the most stubborn and irritable skin affections that can be contracted. The *dhobie* cares little what discomfort his untouchable clients suffer, his most important duties being concerned with Hindu ceremonial, where he plays a very important part in caste ritual. The services imposed on him by caste ritual are not very remunerative at to-day's values; remuneration is mostly in kind. The European's steady monthly payments, therefore, have become almost a necessity, to enable him to take his place in society.

In the Telugu country there is a caste of washermen of many grades and sub-divisions, some of whom consider themselves so highly casteed as to be able to wash only the cloth of a Brahman or his wife. Other divisions, not so mighty, will accept the washing of lower castes if the clothes

are first put to soak in water. This caste is known as Chakalas, and amongst other privileges they are allowed to make torches for processional occasions. On the occasion of a funeral they receive as payment the paddy which is heaped at the head of the corpse, and also the face cloth.

At certain wedding festivals, notably of the Kapu caste, the ceremony cannot proceed without the *dhobie*. He is the traditional keeper of the idol, Ganga, and of certain pieces without which no wedding would be complete. Before the delivery of these pieces he has a whole cartload of excuses, each of which has to be broken down with certain payments such as rice or gingelly oil. The Ganga idol is carried in procession to the temple, and the washerman, dressed as a woman, leads the procession. In other cases, the procession is led by the brother of the bride, decorated with margosa leaves. It is the washerman, again, who decorates the marriage booth, and when he cannot reach a certain place he demands piles of unhusked rice on which to stand. These piles are his payments, and he sees to it that they are sufficiently high.

Not only at weddings and funerals are the *dhobie's* services in great demand, but during a woman's retirement to the menstrual hut he must be in regular attendance. He must provide the new clothes without which no woman could commence her purification ceremonies, and he is allowed to keep the clothes worn by a girl at her first menstruation.

The pickings of the *dhobie* are often loaned to their European clients. It once happened that an unexpected guest found us short of a mosquito net, and the house-boy was despatched to find the *dhobie*. After some delay, he returned with a net which was none too clean, but failing anything else it had to be used. On our guest's departure the boy told us that he had found the *dhobie* attending a funeral, and he had supplied us with the net which had covered the corpse.

One must not expect too much from the *dhobie* during January, when the caste deity, Madivalaya, is propitiated. In honour of this god models of pots and stone slabs, on which the clothes are beaten, are made in paste of rice, or flour, or even mud, and worshipped. Eatables are offered, and a sheep or a goat is sacrificed and some of the blood is

sprinkled over the images. The object of this ceremony is said to be not only the propitiation of the caste deity, but the prevention of the clothes being burnt or spoiled while boiling in the pot. From personal observation over a period of many years, I have come to the conclusion that this ceremony is not very effective. I have never been able to find a *dhobie* who would boil clothes, or even wash them in hot water.

## CHAPTER XXI

### LEGENDS OF THE GODS

**I**N briefly mentioning the legends of the gods I wish to indicate that mythology is a very vital force in Hindu life. It has never been relegated to its place in poetic lore, but lives to-day in the religion and the customs of the people; in every attitude of their daily lives.

The legends centre round the Himalayan watershed, from which place they have spread to every corner of India. They are the primitive endeavours of ancient scribes to depict the origin of life and the elements, and to expound upon their mysteries. It is not impossible to believe that all religions had their root in this centre in the Himalayas. Many of the myths of the Bible have such a similarity as to leave no doubt in the unprejudiced mind about their Vedic origin.

Just as the orthodox Christian accepts, as a canticle of faith, the divinity of the Bible, so no orthodox Hindu doubts the divinity of the Vedas.

To what period in the evolution of the world these writings can be traced, is a point on which no two historians agree. All agree, however, that whatever period is stated is a matter of conjecture. Some place the date at 2000 B.C. and others five hundred years later. My own idea is that the Vedas are older than any of the guesses. The gods who compose the Trimurti: Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva, are the principal gods of the Hindus, but there are hundreds of minor gods who are worshipped and propitiated. To enumerate them would be impossible, for all the gods have not only their descendants but their emanations to be considered. Vishnu existed before his form was conceived. He is the intelligent reality behind energy, and contrives for the welfare of the world. As it was necessary to give him a form which would appeal to worshippers, he is represented as a youth with a halo round his head. This signifies the hue of the sun, and

thousands and thousands of suns had to shine forth simultaneously to produce it. Round his neck he wears a garland, and across his chest, the sacred thread. He was designed in the noblest form conceivable to the human mind, and is the only god who incarnates as a human being to help man. When man calls him he will come, and even a sparrow may request his help. He is deaf to no living thing who appeals to him in trouble, with purity in his heart.

Bhrigu was deputed by the gods to find out who was the greatest among them. He went to Brahma and spoke insultingly to him, and Brahma became very angry. Bhrigu then went to Vishnu, whom he found asleep, and putting his foot on the god's chest, he reviled him for not rising to receive a guest. Vishnu got up humbly and expressed regret for any hurt Bhrigu's foot might have received. The gods unanimously gave Vishnu the highest place among them. He takes no offence if you injure him, but woe to you if you injure an innocent being in his creation, for he is a vengeful god.

While Vishnu was resting (in the age of dormant energy) on the ocean of milk, a lotus sprang from his navel, and on the lotus Brahma was seated. Brahma creates forms, but he cannot infuse life into them, and for this reason he is sometimes called the divine potter. He has four mouths to recite the Vedas, which four mouths represent the four sides of the compass. Brahma reasons on all sides. He is not the son of Vishnu but only an emanation, and consequently dependent on the greater god. He imparts material knowledge to the world, and because of this he is relegated to the third place, the more spiritual Siva and Vishnu taking precedence.

Siva has five characters: the destroyer, the reproductive power of nature, the giver of blessings, the ascetic (the naked), and the learned sage. He is worshipped as the *lingam*, because this is the reproductive power. He represents the divine energy behind the whirl of plastic circumstance. He knows all, the beginning and the end. He is the force which destroys creation, and which recreates it again. He is non-selective, and all that exists of good or bad dwell within him. He is not a moral force, but the phenomena behind life and death. He cannot be won by love or devotion, or even by sacrifice. Sometimes the hideous image which depicts him is seen with

the new moon over its head, and the hair which fertilized the Ganges in snaky profusion about it.

The writings frequently mention the seven great *rishis* (seers), who by the purity of their lives, their devotion to great principles and their austerities, had set an example for the world to follow. They seem to be the basis of moral and spiritual precept.

Long before the compilation of the Vedas the *rishis* had gained paradise, and were symbolized by the ancient scribes in the seven points of the constellation we know as the Great Bear. To realize what effect they had on the character of the Brahmans, whose ancestors they are reputed to be, an old legend is preserved by the Agamudaiyan caste of Tanjore. Human nature appears to have altered little in the past four thousand years. The same trickery, jealousies, passion and intrigues are presented in the old legend as are to be found in the pages of any modern novel. Not even the sanctity of the seers protected them from ordinary human vices.

There were two suitors for the hand of Ahalya, so the story goes, both excellent matches from a spiritual point of view. One was Indra, a god, and the other Gautama, a *rishi*. Ahalya's father decided to settle the question by ordeal. He promised to give his daughter to whichever could remain under water for a thousand years. Indra remained submerged for only half the stipulated period ; but Gautama remained for the thousand years, and gained the hand of Ahalya in marriage.

Inflamed with jealousy, Indra thought of a way to overcome his rival. Knowing that purification before dawn in a sacred tank or river is the first duty of a Brahman, Indra posted himself to watch for Gautama's observance of the rule. Hoping to hurry Gautama out of the house while it was still dark, Indra had disguised himself as a cock, and his lusty crowing awakened Gautama who was lying at the side of his beloved Ahalya. Thinking it was dawn, Gautama went to the river to bathe, and Indra, assuming the other's form, entered the house and ravished the object of his passion.

When Gautama reached the river and found no signs of dawn he was much perturbed. But his supernatural knowledge soon revealed to him how he had been beguiled, and he

cursed Indra and his wife. Indra was condemned to have a thousand female organs of generation scattered all over his body, and Ahalya was turned into stone. Later, Indra repented, and Gautama modified the disfigurement by arranging that to all onlookers Indra would appear to be covered with eyes. Ahalya, also, was permitted to resume her feminine form. In the end Rama effected a reconciliation between Gautama and Ahalya, claiming that Ahalya, because she had been the innocent victim of Indra, should not be banished by her husband. Rama was not so generous when he came to judge his own wife, Sita. She, like Cæsar's wife, had to be above suspicion.

Rama, about whom the Ramayana was written, re-incarnated upon earth to protect the Brahmans in their sacrifices. The sacred writings fail to explain why Rama came to extol Brahmanic privileges, and degrade the lower castes to which he and his family belonged.

The stories of Rama, with true Hindu disregard for statement, differ in all the books. The Jains and the Buddhists conflict greatly as to the character of Rama, while even the usually accepted Valmiki has three variations. The Ramayana of Valmiki was in the beginning an attack against the Brahmanic assumption of greatness, but with the passing of time it has become one of the chief supports of Brahmanic superiority.

In one of his battles Rama kills the woman, Takara, who was a brigand. Valmiki points out that this is not unchivalrous, because a person must be judged by his act and not by his sex.

Rama, again, marries the girl Sita, whom he finds discarded in a field, and in this he shows a total disregard for Brahmanic restrictions. No doubt Valmiki, who was a non-Brahman, married Rama off in this manner to annoy the Brahmanic conceit.

Rama allowed himself to be banished from home, at the wish of his senile father, which act is pointed out by Hindu fathers, to force their sons into obedience. For thirteen years Rama remained in exile, in spite of the fact that Dasharatha is continually beseeching him to return as King of Ajodhya.

Rama's wife is abducted by Ravanna, and taken to



Lanka (Ceylon). Hanuman, the monkey god (no doubt a poetic idea of an aborigine), helped Rama to recover Sita but he recovers her only to banish her when she is slandered by a washerman. Rama had no sons by Sita, and by sending her into exile he had to forego his hope of heaven. He is the Hindu ideal of renunciation.

Mount Maha-Mehru, in Nepal, appears to have stimulated the imagination of the old writers, and on the slopes of this mountain they symbolized the four heavens. To the north is placed Swarja, or Indra's paradise ; on a higher level to the east is Kailasa, Siva's paradise ; still higher to the south lies Vaikuntha, the paradise of Vishnu ; and on the summit, above the line of eternal snows, stands Satty-loka, Brahma's paradise.

Father Desideri, an explorer of the eighteenth century, and Dr. Hedin, of more recent times, have extolled the beauties of the mountain, and it is the dream of all Hindus to follow the footsteps of Vapara Yoga, who, according to the Mahabharata, set the example of pilgrimage.

H.H. the Maharaja of Mysore, with a considerable retinue, recently made the pilgrimage to Kailasa. But, with all the facilities of transport that his wealth enabled him to command, the journey took over three months, of which the greater part was spent climbing the mountain on foot. To all but the rich, owing to endless presents to various authorities and tribes, this pilgrimage would appear impossible. But I have spoken to many seemingly poor Sanyassins, who claim to have made it wholly on foot ; including the arduous task, said to take a month, of going round Kailasa by a series of prostrations in which they measure their length on the ground.

No sooner has death destroyed the material body, than the two messengers of Yama (the god of death) appear and take charge of the spirit. These messengers are of terrifying aspect. They have large glittering eyes, erect hair, gnashing teeth, crow-black skin, and claw-like nails. The poor spirit, bound in Yama's noose, is conducted to the judgment seat and confronted with justice in the form of Chitra Gupta. While in his earthly life, all the deceased's deeds were entered in the ledger of justice either on the credit or debit side, and it is with this account, carefully balanced by Chitra Gupta, that the spirit is presented.



ONE OF THE TORTURES OF TAIPIUSAN. THIS DEVOTEE HAS BEEN BRANDED WITH HOT IRONS. THE MARKS ON THE LEGS WERE CAUSED BY THE OPERATION. (See page 33)



Indra's paradise, on the lower slopes of the mountain, contains all the sacred animals and trees which are worshipped by Hindus. Spirits of whatever rank or caste are free to wander through this delightful land, provided Gupta has decided favourably on their balance sheet. Not even carnal joys are neglected, for innumerable courtesans are provided.

These courtesans are said to be returned to mortal life at times to suit the policy of Indra, the lord of heaven. One of the passages of the Mahabharata relates that Indra once feared that the austerities and purity of Vishvamitra would oust him from leadership, and make Vishvamitra the dictator of heaven. Vishvamitra, once a king, had renounced all the magnificence of his courtly life and had retired into seclusion. His renunciation had as its object the attainment of a spiritual grace excelling that of Vasistra, another seer. Menaka, who at that time was the most beautiful and accomplished courtesan of heaven, was sent to earth to tempt Vishvamitra away from his saintly life. At the latter's hermitage Menaka invoked the elements, and as the seer looked up from his meditation the breeze parted her garments, revealing all her loveliness. With that the god of desire entered Vishvamitra's heart. When Menaka found herself with child, she considered her mission successfully accomplished and returned to the gates of Swarja. But as the baby had not then earned the right of entry into paradise, it had to be left in the care of the swans in the reeds by the river Malini.

The picture drawn of Indra's heaven conveys the impression of a very pleasant preparation for those who desire to advance to further heights. Bruhaspati is there as *guru*, and offers instruction to all seeking enlightenment. Bruhaspati was appointed by the Devas as their priest, and the translation of the word Deva means shining light; but it has grown to mean a "minor god."

Siva's paradise, Kailasa, has been symbolized higher up the slopes on the eastern side. Here, for recreation, Siva and his wife Parvati ride round the paths on Nandi, Siva's bull, with a demon escort. With the cry of "*Kil-kil*" the escort clears the way, and it is said that this cry gave the name *Kailasa* to that particular district. Allowing for the altitude, and the

wind at certain seasons, one might connect the call of the demon escort with the howling of the tempest. To withstand the rigours of this climate, Siva is depicted as wearing a tiger-skin buckled with snakes. In this heaven Siva and his wife are said to exist in one continuous sex orgy, guarded by their sons Ganesh and Kartika (Subramanya), who are endowed with colossal strength.

Siva, in the rôle of destroyer, plans all wars with his lieutenants Bringi, Bhimi, and Kadurgita, who are also in Kailasa. These naked warriors wander over the heavenly domain drinking, fighting and quarrelling.

Legend has it that the artists who contributed to the decoration of the Ellora caves were asked to depict what they believed Siva destroyed. They answered, by their murographs on the walls of the caves, "nothing but the fetters which bind each separate soul." A ferocious demon garlanded with skulls entwined with serpents, and possessed of four arms and five faces, is the way they depicted Siva. The most courageous "fetter" would surely turn and run from the pursuit of a soul, when it saw such a monster approaching.

Out of the hundreds of legends concerning the source of Siva's two sons, I have selected the following :

Agni (the god of fire), as messenger of the gods, appeared before Siva and his wife Parvati, and said that the gods were very distressed because Siva had not begotten a son. Siva thereupon bestowed his fruitful germ on Agni, who bore it away and finally gave it to Ganges (the river goddess). Ganges nurtured and cared for it, and one morning, when the six Pleiades came to bathe in the river, the goddess hid the child in the rushes, where Siva and Parvati found it. They took the child with great rejoicing to their heaven in Kailasa. When the child grew up, the gods requested his aid, and, making him a general, Siva sent him to lead the army of the gods against Takara. He conquered the demon, slew her, and restored peace to heaven. Kumara is identified in various parts of India as Kartikeya, or Subrahmanya.

In the legend of the second son of Siva, Ganesh, the old writers have illustrated not so much their extraordinary and fantastic imaging, as a display of ordinary human emotions exaggerated to meet the importance of their subject. The gross egotism of Parvati is as much a characteristic to-day

of the temperament of the people, as it was in the earliest days of history.

The legend states that the cradle of Ganesh was visited by all the gods and demi-gods, with the exception of Shani, he of the evil eye. Parvati declared that Shani's absence indicated a total disregard of her position and the divinity of her child ; but in reality the reason was quite the reverse, Shani fearing that his evil glance would injure the child. Imperiously Parvati sent for the offender, saying that no evil eye could affect her child, and, to the horror of all present, when Shani looked at the child its head disappeared in flames. In a towering rage Parvati ordered Shani to restore the head of her child, which had turned to ashes ; but this was beyond Shani's power, as he could destroy but not renew. Brahma was then appealed to, and he ordered Shani to search the forest and bring back the first head he could find. A condition of the order was that only an animal found in error could be decapitated, and after a long search the only creature fulfilling that condition was an elephant, who was sleeping with his head toward the north. All Hindus sleep headed south or east ; although the Puranas, seeking to explain the Vedic code, do not explain the reason. The elephant, accordingly, was beheaded, and the head united to the child's body.

In every ceremony this elephant-headed Ganesh is the first god to be worshipped. His mount is the rat ; he denotes wisdom ; and he is depicted with a large belly, signifying contentment. His picture is found on the title page of every Hindu book, and at the head of every lesson, emphasizing the need of wisdom in all actions.

Vaikuntha, Vishnu's heaven, has a decidedly pleasant south aspect. But here again the old sages did not forget to include material attractions to entice the followers of Vishnu. Gold and precious objects abound on all sides ; under the influence of Vishnu's wife, Lakshmi, the study of literature is encouraged in idyllic settings bordering the river Viraja ; while in the wooded glades the spirit finds food and flowers, which grow without cultivation.

Lakshmi encourages meditation, and stimulates the study of the Vedas. Only by studying the Vedas can penitents prepare themselves for the final reincarnation. This reincarnation passes them, through Brahmanism, to the

ultimate summit of Satty-loka, the abode of virtue, and from there they send down the waters of the Ganges, purified and sanctified for the use of the earth.

Hell is also provided for, and it is placed under the guardianship of Yama, the god of death. So far as I can ascertain, it has not been symbolized in any part of India, but it must be somewhere in the south. Many of the southern castes bury their dead with the head toward the south. In this position, it is argued, they will arise with their face toward the north; that is, in the direction of the heavenly spheres. If they were laid with their head to the north, they would arise facing south, facing Yamadu, lord of Hades.

There are many legends emphasizing the jealousies and quarrels between the guardians of the various heavens and Yama, the god of death, and in the Skanda Purana (which is the authority for one of the greatest Hindu festivals, Siva's night, celebrated in March), there occurs the following story.

A tired huntsman found himself one night lost in the forest. As a protection from wild beasts he climbed a bilva tree, and slept in a fork of its branches. At that time of the year there was a heavy dew, and the hunter's restlessness, due to his uncomfortable position, caused a continuous flow of dew, leaves, flowers, and fruit to fall upon a *lingam* which had been built at the foot of the tree by a previous Sivaite pilgrim. This unconscious offering of the restless sleeper so pleased the god that, when the hunter died of the exposure some few days later, Siva sent his emissaries to bring his spirit to Kailasa. But the messengers of Yama were already there to conduct the spirit to hell, and a violent quarrel ensued, in which the messengers of Yama were badly wounded and put to flight by Siva's party. Yama, deciding to complain to Siva of the abduction of one of his spirits, and the rough treatment meted out to his messengers, went in person to the gate of Kailasa, where he met Nandi, the sacred ox, Siva's Prime Minister. Yama expressed his surprise that Siva should protect a common hunter, a hardened sinner whose trade was the slaughter of animals. "King of Hell," replied Nandi, "true, this huntsman was a great sinner, but by his offering of bilva fruit and dew to Siva's *lingam*,

he obtained the remission of all his sins, and earned for himself an honourable place in Kailasa."

In this divine comedy, interlaced through hundreds of Vedas, puranas, Shastras, and the like, countless false interpretations and gross exaggerations have crept into the religion, until it has become, as it were, a shambles where each one does as he pleases and places his own interpretation on the mysteries of life.

Caste has poured a host of legends to account for the most insignificant details of life. Even the wearing of ornaments by women must be linked with some divine cause, other than the purely physical adornment or the intrinsic value. Thus, woman does not wear ear-rings because they enhance her attractions; but because, in some mysterious way, they link her with the deity, Lakshmi.

The Baliya bangle sellers have a legend to explain the origin of their caste. It seems that Parvati was inclined to neglect her appearance, and Siva informed her that he might transfer his affections elsewhere if she did not remedy this matter. Tearfully, Parvati requested her lord's aid, and from his hair Siva created an attendant, who appeared bearing bangles. Parvati arrayed herself in the ornaments, and so reawakened Siva's passion.

To preserve the peace of Vaikuntha, Vishnu was asked to protect the *rishis* against the ravages of the *rukshasas* (giants). Not wishing to take sides with either party, the god referred the seers to his wife. Lakshmi then presented them with a casket containing her ear-rings, with injunctions to worship them for five hundred years. Her order was faithfully carried out, and at the end of the appointed time five hundred armed warriors sprang from the casket and destroyed the giants.

Brahmans, who have power over evil spirits and are able to cure diseases, attribute their power to Siva. They quote the legend of the infidelity of Parvati; who, during her husband's drunken orgies, listened to the burning words of Agni, the god of fire.

When in the amorous embrace of Agni Parvati heard Siva approaching, she took the only means available to avoid detection, and concealed Agni in her body. Finding her writhing in pain Siva was so distressed, and so intoxicated,



that he commenced to cry. As one of the tears touched the floor, it was transformed into a man; who, being divinely formed, was immediately able to diagnose the cause of Parvati's pain. How Parvati managed to convey her predicament to the tear-man, and not to the tear-man's divine creator, legend does not explain. The tear-man, however, demanded a lighted torch, on which he sprinkled some incense, and in the smoke thus produced Agni was able to escape and Parvati's agony ceased. The cure of his wife so pleased Siva that he gave to the descendants of the tear-man the power to cure diseases, to exorcise demons, and to foretell events. Many castes, who aspire to Brahman status, endeavour to trace their ancestry from this legend.

The astrologers caste was originally Brahmanic. How they came to be outcasted is the subject of a legend, which the Kaniyan and the Tiyan castes quote to bolster up their claim to Brahman ancestry.

With his occult powers a certain Brahman astrologer was able to know that his old teacher, whom he greatly loved and respected, was about to die. Consultation with his horoscope showed the astrologer that any journey undertaken at this time would be extremely unlucky. Yet in spite of this warning, so strong was the seer's desire to say good-bye to his old teacher, that he decided that the journey must be made.

When he was some days on his way, the astrologer encountered the monsoon rains, and took refuge one night on the verandah of a house. There he fell asleep, meditating on the family he had left behind. His meditations produced dreams, and he imagined that he heard his wife calling him. Now it happened that the mistress of the house on whose verandah he was sheltering had that day quarrelled with her husband, and the woman's tongue had driven the husband from home. About midnight, therefore, when she thought she heard him returning, she opened the door and saw a man lying on the verandah. Thinking it was her husband, she called to him to enter.

In his dream the Brahman thought it was his own wife calling him, and sleepily he complied. But in the morning, when he found he had been sleeping with an outcast woman, he knew that his horoscope had been correct, and philosophi-

cally he accepted the degradation, knowing he could not return to his Brahman wife. It is not related what became of the outcast woman's husband. Not being a Brahman, the legend does not concern itself about him.

Several sons were born to the astrologer and his second wife, and they, under their father's tuition, also became astrologers. With their father's influence these sons found good positions with rich patrons, and became the founders of the Tiyan caste.

There are two versions of this legend, both practically the same. In one case the mistress of the house was a Kaniyan woman, and in the other she was a Tiyan. In neither story is the childish absurdity of the facts remarked, the only important point being that of the Brahman descent.

No legend has so enhanced the value of a precious stone as that handed down from the Skanda Purana. In comparison with the intrinsic value of the genuine salagrama stone, the Koh-i-noor and Jubilee diamonds fade into insignificance, although the salagrama appears to have no value outside Hindu countries. The Atharva Veda decrees that a Brahman's house without a salagrama stone is as impure as a cemetery, and any food cooked therein as unclean as the excrement of a dog.

To touch water in which this stone has been washed, is to receive absolution from all sin however grievous, and the possession of such a stone assures perpetual wealth. To drink water which has been sanctified with salagrama, provides happiness in this world and a place in Swarja, the ultimate goal. To invoke the power of salagrama, the god Vishnu must be supplicated with the prayer *Narayana* ("You are the ruler of the world") and the worship which accompanies it.

The salagrama legend centres round a low-caste dancing girl, whose head was turned by her own beauty. Failing to find a mate to match her loveliness, she retired to the Himalayas to fast and meditate. During this period she encountered the god Vishnu, and was so enamoured of his beauty that she demanded the full satisfaction of her passion. On account of her profession, and her low caste, however, the god pretended to remain cold to her voluptuous invitation. Here the creators of the Hindu gods had in mind the symbolization of their deities' human weaknesses, of which compromise and justification are not the least. In the end,

not wishing to pollute his caste, but at the same time determined not to lose all the delight which was offered him, Vishnu took a middle course. He promised that the dancing girl should reincarnate in the form of a river, and that he, in the form of a salagrama stone, would lie in the river's bed as her eternal lover. Thus was founded the Gandaki River, and one of the incarnations of Vishnu in the form of a precious stone. The description of the river and the stone in the Skanda Purana is incredibly filthy.

The legend binding the salagrama stone to Vishnu's body has proved a source of great wealth to the Native State of Nepal (the home of the Gurkhas), through which the River Gandaki runs most of its course until it joins the Ganges near Patna. Indeed, so valuable is this stone, that the concession for its recovery from the river bed has been farmed out to concessionees by the Maharaja. The concessionees are bound to submit the recovered stones for the Maharaja's inspection.

The stone is known to geologists as fossil *cephalopods* (*ammonites*). Its worth is not considered by weight ; but by certain spiral markings, a hole in a certain position, and various spiritual tests. Its value, none the less, often exceeds four thousand pounds. The hole was produced by Brahma, who, in his incarnation as a water worm, at the request of Vishnu bored holes known as *vadanās*. He traced also the spirals, or *chakrams* as they are called.

Tradition has it that the mysterious power of salagrama was discovered accidentally by a simple *kashatriya* (a soldier). This soldier discovered that with the stone in his mouth, or clasped in his hand, he was able to accomplish all his desires. His luck was so phenomenal that he became a great king, and was finally borne up to heaven in a cloud by Vishnu ; not before, however, he had imparted the secret to one of his courtiers.

Like all precious stones, salagramas have not escaped the bad luck superstition. Unlucky stones are known as *ugra chakra salagrama*, or "furious stones." Bad luck may follow their possessor, especially if prayers offered are not ardent enough to propitiate the deity. The possessors of a furious stone are advised to present it to a temple, where the ardent prayers of priests and pilgrims will keep it from doing its worst.

The stone's efficacy depends upon how it is acquired, and one that has been acquired dishonestly will bring nothing but evil to its possessor. The Government of Nepal have their own tests. They depend upon no acid which might be falsified, but upon the scales of justice. A stone, on reception, after careful tapping to remove encrustations and expose the spirals, is placed in one pan of the scale, while in the other pan rice is added to an equal weight. If, in twenty-four hours, the rice has increased in weight (it is said sometimes to double itself) the stone is priceless ; but if the scale remains even, or if the rice diminishes, it is of little value.

The Brahmans, as usual, have done their best to keep the mascot within the caste, and have decreed that only Brahmans can worship the stone. The orthodox Hindus believe that the possession of the salagrama without worship is unlucky ; but no Brahman house is complete without one, and often two or three are said to be necessary.

Thousands of so-called salagrama are sold by charlatans, fortune-tellers and others. There is a caste of religious beggars, the Bairagis, who are expert at faking the salagrama, and then passing it off at a good price to some credulous buyer. So skilfully is the fake produced that only after years, or possibly generations, of washing can the deception be discovered. False *vadanās* are bored in pebbles, and faked *chakrams* are traced in slate and pasted on the pebbles.

## CHAPTER XXII

### MYSORE DASARA

**U**NDER the *Aswija* (September or October) moon, the Dasara festival begins. *Dasara* means ten nights, and for ten nights and days the festival continues. A more elaborate spectacle than the Dasara of Mysore can be seen nowhere in the world to-day. To say that the city is arrayed for carnival, gives no idea of the ten nights. Haroun-el-Rashid might have dreamed of something resembling it for ten of his Arabian nights.

The palace of the Maharaja twinkles with thousands of electric lights. From the temple at the entrance gate a god, so decked in jewels and garlands that only his face remains visible, looks out at his worshippers, who are dressed in silks, exquisite linen, and tissues of spun gold. The metallic clink of bracelets and necklaces is heard above the wail of age-old musical instruments, and glittering figures bring their offerings to the temple and prostrate themselves before the god. For all this the nights have a strange quiet, and it is as if the worshippers moved through an ancient dance lost in meditation.

The days blaze with colour, until the eyes fairly ache. It would seem that where nature is so passionately vivid, nothing could be added to the picture. But streamers fly from posts for miles, and temporary structures along the streets are buried under multi-coloured silk and embroidery. On the tenth day (victory day), the Maharaja, seated on the State elephant, caparisoned with velvet, flowers and jewels, leads a procession through the streets.

It was customary in former years for the Prime Minister to ride beside him. But the present Prime Minister is a Mohammedan, and the heir apparent sits beside the Maharaja to-day. The elephant's huge ears are painted with designs such as one sees in old frescoes, and he wears gold anklets studded with precious stones.

The cream-coloured State cows, walking close together, wear ropes of pearls and gold casings on their horns. Across their backs purple silk is thrown, into which gold thread has been woven. Their hoofs have received a gold wash, and just above them are clamped anklets, the value of which would balance a tottering empire. Men wearing *dhoties* as light as a cobweb, move along carrying garlands of flowers ; followed by men in uniform and the Palace guard, resembling players in some gorgeous extravaganza. The orchestra plays something which might have been heard in the temple of Milita in old Babylon while the virgins sacrificed themselves to Venus. Sometimes the animals from the Zoo have been known to join the procession. The whole pageant is as colourful and sensuous as an oriental carpet on which slept some barbaric princess of old.

Before the opening of the festival, an auspicious hour has been chosen for setting up the Maharaja's throne in the Durbar hall. It is the throne of his house, and is used now only for the Dasara. Tradition says that the throne was once the possession of the Pandavas, the heroes of the Mahabharata, and that it later belonged to the Yadu dynasty of Sri Krishna, from which ancestry the present reigning family claim descent. It is also said, that after the English had conquered Seringapatam, the throne was rescued from Tippu Sultan's lumber-room and set up for the house of Wodiyar, in the state of Mysore. When the throne is set up in the Durbar hall, the image of a lion is placed on it ; since it was on a lion that the goddess Kali went into the battle against the demons.

On the occasions of the Dasara the goddess Kali destroys the demon of physical desire, who, in the form of a buffalo, is called Bandasura. The battle waged for nine days, and the victory to Kali came on the tenth day. One of the goddesses, who fought beside Kali, slew the two demons Chanda and Manda. For this daring exploit the goddess was called Chamundi, the name being a combination of the names of the defeated demons. Chamundi hill, from which at night the city of Mysore with its thousands of lights reflected in the sacred tanks looks like an enchantment, is associated with the goddess. The Maharaja has a small temple on the top of the hill, to which he frequently retires to meditate. It is said that

he is a holy man, who refuses to leave his beloved India to visit the materially-minded West.

For the first nine days of the Dasara the Maharaja cannot leave the palace. Standing before the image of the family goddess Chamundi, wearing a bracelet which is sacred to her, and a substantial growth of beard (during the nine days he must not shave), he is supposed to give himself up to the contemplation of his soul. No energy should be given to physical desire of any sort, consequently all his attention is concentrated upon the goddess and the occasion. The Maharaja is the central point of the Dasara, as according to the ancient laws of Manu the king was the representative of God. He was the will, the devotion of all his people, and during the nine nights, by his own purification, he purifies his subjects.

The festival of the nine nights is called the Navaratri. There is no difference between the two festivals, save that the Dasara celebrates its day of victory. On the ninth night European guests, who wish to pay their respects individually and receive floral acknowledgment, are received by the Maharaja. At the palace both Western and Eastern music can be heard each night of the festival.

All the aspects of the Dasara are feminine. It is the *Sakta*, which in Mysore takes what is known as the right-hand path. This means that it does not descend into its lowest form. The people are apparently content with the magnificent pageant furnished by the Maharaja.

The *sakti*, or energy of the masculine principle, goes into the female principle for destructive reasons. The female represents the male as the agent of destruction. Some woman, usually a virgin (although even widows have been known to officiate), represents the energy of Siva. Sometimes the woman is worshipped as the wife, sometimes as the mother. Behind all this objective expression lies the cosmic energy, of which Siva is supposed to be the active embodiment. The cosmic energy, which is believed by the Hindus to be masculine, cannot destroy. It has created the world and all that is in it, and when it seeks to destroy it must become feminine.

In this respect Hinduism does not differ very much from other religions. From time immemorial human imagination

has given the woman the rôle of destruction. Even her power to destroy, according to the Hindus, had to be borrowed from man. Each Hindu god shows his disposition through his *sakti*, or wife. Siva (who has a host of wives to represent his various moods) must destroy in order to build, and is impersonated by the bloodthirsty goddess, Kali. Brahma, a milder god, uses his energy in the goddess Saraswati ; while Vishnu, the lord of creation, uses Lakshmi as his vehicle of power.

To illustrate the far-fetched meaning dragged into every act of daily life, I quote the following by an Indian writer, because it bears on the *sakti*.

“ The Hindu ladies in Southern India wear their hair parted by a furrow on the crown of their head. What is this custom due to ? Ladies in different countries wear their hair arranged in different ways. Some wear it in a single pigtail while others in two or more pigtails and so on. A large quantity of curl paper is made use of in the countries of the West to give the hair an artificial curl<sup>1</sup> in place of the one denied by dame Nature. But the Hindu ladies wear their hair parted on the crown by a line running from front to back. In the case of grown-up and aged dames, the hair is simply gathered in a knot, whereas young girls and women wear it in a single pigtail. But every one wears it parted on either side leaving a furrow-like streak of skin exposed on the crown of the head. . . . ”

“ Like every other Hindu custom this also is followed with a particular significance attached to it. A woman symbolizes *sakti* or power. There is also a myth emphasizing this statement. Siva, one of the Hindu Trinity, was once conceited and thought that he was the all in all. His wife, Uma, wanted to teach him that without her help, he would be able to achieve nothing. With this object in view She, who was always with Him and in Him, left him for a while. Siva all on a sudden felt himself deprived of all his strength and energy to activity ! He was lying in a precarious condition, unable even to stir when his wife came there. He prayed to her to lift him up. She told him that he might try to stand up without her help, as he could not do so he had to acknowledge her position as *Sakti*. . . . ”

<sup>1</sup> He wrote this in 1926 when the permanent wave was going strong.



After a lot more of the same, the author says : " This is the reason why *Sakti* is assigned a very important place in every form of worship and in temples. . . .

" When once this fact is grasped the custom of leaving a furrow on the crown of the woman's head parting the hair into the right half and the left half will become intelligible. It symbolizes the radiation of the positive and the negative energies from a central place . . . "

" . . . , the furrow . . . represents in a masterly manner this completion of the circuit between two mighty positive and negative centres, resulting in the mental plane in the formation of the universe in the beginning, to be later on crystallized and materialized into the coarser world we see. . . . "

The writer of the above evidently became a little involved. But let us hope that when a woman has got away from the pigtail stage and furrows her hair properly, she will understand the completion of the circuit between two mighty positive and negative centres.

The Hindus say that there is no idolatry in their belief for those who have penetrated below the surface to the basis of cosmic truth. Anyone familiar with India will be led to believe that very few have so penetrated. In view of the surface result, the sooner the basic truth is penetrated and overthrown the better.

At the Mysore Dasara wrestling bouts are staged which the Maharaja watches. Special attention is paid to girls of unusual beauty, as they are considered special representatives of the *sakti*. The animals are grouped with the human population on this occasion, and all are purified ; the State elephant and the State horse having a special ceremony.

After the State sword is worshipped, it is placed in a palanquin and sent with the State horse and elephant to the parade ground, three miles from the palace. At sunset a parade of troops is held on the ground. The scene is very dramatic, with its background of amber sky, and its veil of sparkling sun-mist. The Maharaja performs *puja* (worship) before the State sword and the banni-tree, and the sword is then sent back to the palace, accompanied by the elephant and the horse. The Maharaja follows by torchlight.

The worship of the banni-tree is an incident from the

Mahabharata. Arjuna (brother of the king of Delhi, who had lost his kingdom through gambling) had buried celestial weapons under such a tree. Arjuna had won these weapons by his austerities. When the king of Delhi, at the advice of a *rishi*, left his territory to go into exile, his four brothers accompanied him, together with their wife. For, even as the soul is wedded to the five external powers, the Princess Draupadi was wedded to the five brothers. While in exile, they all entered the palace of King Virata as servants, and Arjuna, the third brother, disguised as a eunuch, taught music and dancing. The other brothers fitted where they could into the household of King Virata, and the Princess Draupadi became a waiting woman.

Now King Virata was greatly troubled by cattle raids. And enemies descending on the kingdom of Virata while the king was absent, Arjuna, the disguised eunuch, went into battle as a charioteer. Remembering the celestial weapons which he had received for his former austerities, he dug them up and took them with him into the fight. Naturally, with such weapons, he routed the enemies and rescued the cattle. Arjuna then took a vow to worship the banni-tree every year.

*Sakti puja*, in its left-handed form, is too degrading to be tolerated by the Government, and also too expensive to be performed frequently. When it is undertaken, it must be in secret. If the participators can be assured of secrecy, and the necessary funds can be raised, it occurs sometimes in the forest at night. It is said that when possible the Vamacharis in Bengal observe the most disgusting performance. The Tiyans of Malabar, however, are almost equally bad, and their temple of Kotiyur is sometimes the scene of the most revolting practices which it is possible to imagine.

These people say that the highest merit in *sakti* can be reached only when one has reached such a state of intoxication that one does not know what one is doing. The five senses of the body are supposed to be the slaves of the soul, and the soul must have what it desires, since it is essential for it to have satisfaction. The nose smells for the soul, the eyes see for it, the ears hear for it, the tongue tastes for it, and the generative organs enjoy for it. Thus, when the soul desires an object, it demands that the senses procure it. The soul absorbs all the magnetism and energy from the object through

the senses, and so long as body and soul are united, the soul, like some hideous vampire, sucks the body dry. At death, the soul takes everything with it, leaving its five slaves, the senses, to decay. There are no lengths to which the senses should not go, and this sacrifice of the body wins merit for the soul, which by obtaining all earthly experiences need not reincarnate on the earth but can remain in paradise.

The *sakti puja* is one of the ceremonies on the way to paradise. The least objectionable practices of the *sakti* are getting drunk or drugged with opium ; cohabiting with any woman, whether she be a virgin or another's wife ; and eating all the forbidden foods, especially beef. Chunks of the beef are passed from person to person, and each takes a bite. An act of merit is to take the meat out of someone's mouth, when it is half-chewed, put it in one's own mouth and swallow it. A similar act of grace is to make as many indecent postures as possible.

As the performance takes place in the jungle at night, a fire is built so that no act of merit shall be obscured by darkness. A naked girl, usually a virgin, stands beside the fire at the beginning of the ceremony in an indecent attitude. The goddess of the *sakti* is then invoked to come into the girl's body. Because the goddess has taken up her abode in the girl's body, cohabitation with the girl and the goddess is one and the same thing. The goddess also comes into the toddy and the opium.

All castes meet on the same level at the *sakti*. The high and mighty Brahman for the moment is the equal of the Pariah, and the two may exchange chewed food and drink from the same cup, even if one happens to be a leper. Men and women, without any restraint, tear their clothes off and fall upon each other, and everything occurring to the imagination is acted out physically. Drunkenness usually ends the debauch, the assembly becoming too intoxicated to move.

The Hindus are extreme in everything. To excuse their vehement passions and the horrible practices in which they wish to indulge, they drag in religion and invest their degrading orgies with ceremony. We know there were acts in the Greek culture which no modern Greek would tolerate, and the Scriptures tell us of the abominations of Baal. My contention is not that vile performances never existed in other parts of

the world, but that the rest of the world has long ago emerged from such degradation in the name of religion. India cannot expect, therefore, to be tolerated by other nations until she also discards such observances.

No Hindu will admit having anything to do with the *sakti*. They are ashamed to say anything about it, and if questioned they may pretend that they have never heard of it. A solemn oath is taken that the mystery of *sakti* will never be revealed, except by permission of the *guru*, and then only on the death-bed.

The spirit of *sakti* must be withdrawn from the body of a *sakti* worshipper before he dies. A tulsi plant and some rice are placed beside the dying man, and holding a few leaves from the plant and a little rice in one hand, he makes three passes from head to foot with the other hand, transferring the spirit to a waiting man and saying he wishes the worship to continue. If he should die before the transfer is made, a Brahman priest must be called in. The priest, with an image to represent the deceased, then makes a symbolic transfer. If this is not done, the soul of the departed cannot obtain salvation.

One of the *sakti* legends relates that once seven heavenly maidens used to bathe every day at dawn in a lake in the forest. Siva heard of it, and appeared on the bank as a fire at which the girls stopped to warm themselves. Swept off his feet by their beauty, Siva made them all mothers, and each had a beautiful son. Siva presented the seven sons to his wife Parvati.

The goddess took the sons to Kailasa, taught them how to make the toddy for the *sakti* worship, and daily the boys poured the toddy which they made into a golden pot. One day, however, Parvati embraced them all simultaneously, and turned them into a single boy. This boy then sent the sacred toddy to the *sakti* ceremony in charge of a Brahman, and while the Brahman was resting on the bank of a river, he became curious about his charge, and, having drunk some of it, filled the pot up with water. Being a little intoxicated, he reached the part of Kailasa where the worship took place too late for the daily ceremony.

Siva was very angry, and ordered Parvati's boy to be brought to him. The boy, having heard how angry the god

was, found the Brahman and beheaded him, and carried the head to Siva. The boy explained that anyone who prevented the worship of *sakti* deserved to die, but Siva retorted that the killing of a Brahman was the worst of all crimes, and he put the boy out of caste. The boy, overcome with grief, begged Siva to put him to death, which request so pleased the god that he forgave him.

The boy was initiated into all the mysteries of *sakti* worship, and was given the privilege of performing the *sakti* worship with toddy. He was commanded to follow the Brahmans, and to imitate them in everything but the repeating of the sacred *mantrams*. By *tantrams* (waving the hands about), however, he finally obtained sufficient merit to remove his one disability.

*Sakti*, which no doubt started in the idea of cosmic energy, has been perverted in the confused practices of phallic worship, and has come to mean the worship of the physical principle in nature.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### SUPERSTITIONS

**I**N India, where barely two per cent of the population can read or write, and where religion is built up on bloodthirsty and neurotic legends, superstition plays an important part in daily life. But often, students who have attended European universities are bitten by this poisonous asp when they return to India. The chirping or fall of the lizard ; the shadow of a bird in flight ; the flutter of a leaf ; the first object one sees when awakening in the morning, are of the utmost importance in the sense of superstitious observance.

The lizard formula is so long and complicated that I wonder how any Indian can remember it. Everything depends upon the number of chirps, and the direction from which they come. As it is not unusual for two or more lizards to be chirping from different directions at the same time, deductions become rather involved. If a lizard chirps twice from the south-east on Monday, it portends rebellion. On Friday, however, the meaning is that the hearer will be decorated. The chirps which on Tuesday indicate enmity, on Saturday denote relationship with a new woman.

The lizard is a courageous little reptile, and to avoid danger, or to escape from a palm squirrel, he will not hesitate to throw himself from a rafter to the floor. His fall augurs good or evil, to whoever happens to be underneath. If he falls on one's head it means death ; if on the eyes, it indicates prison. It is lucky if he falls on the forehead or the right arm, for this means coronation or general good health. Falling on the lips or chin is not so good, since there is a chance of losing money or of receiving priestly punishment. On the left arm the fall means great sexual enjoyment, but should it fall on the penis one will suffer penury and want. These are only a few of the lizard superstitions.

It is amusing to watch foreigners, who have heard of the

superstition, pausing during the evening bridge to count the chirps. Boys can be seen framing the count with their lips while serving at table.

Another indication of good or bad influences is contained in the sneeze. Should one sneeze but once it indicates failure, but sneezing twice is decidedly auspicious. There are employed a number of absurd antics in order to produce the second sneeze.

Some friends and I were sitting under a tree in my garden in Mysore, when a leaf fluttered down. Before it could alight on a lady's shoulder an Indian surgeon, attached to a regiment stationed in the district, diverted it so that it fluttered to the ground. To do this he jumped up, and overturned a small table.

The Surgeon explained that we were sitting under a tamarind tree, which in itself was a very unwise thing to do. After examining the leaf, however, his face lighted up and a smile displaced apprehension. When he had apologized for turning over the table, he told the lady that nothing disastrous would have happened even if the leaf had touched her, as it was not a dead one. Had it been a dead leaf, some dire calamity, which nothing could avert, would have followed.

The Indian then recounted a story of a brother officer, who wished to make a journey which his wife, after consulting the stars, had decided would be most unfortunate. The woman induced her husband to promise her that on the outward journey he would sleep under tamarind trees, explaining that they gave more shade and protection than any other trees. The wife knew that sleeping under the tamarind tree would produce fever, and thereby oblige her husband to abandon the journey.

Incidentally, why the husband should not have known about the reputation of the tree I cannot imagine.

A friend, at a dinner party in Bangalore, told us that her boy believed an attack of synovitis she was suffering of had been caused by the shadow of a big night bird which had flown over her unawares.

The boy explained that all dislocations and cricks in bones were caused by the shadow of the same bird as it flew about at night. Nobody knew the name of the creature, and no doubt it was a demon in bird-form. The boy had seen it on

one or two occasions, and had hidden under a tree so its shadow could not touch him.

A caste of Tamil artisans pay particular attention to what they see in the early morning, especially on their New Year's day. The women make it their duty to ensure that on New Year's day their husbands, on waking, see only objects of good omen. Ashes, firewood, and oil, being unlucky, are carefully screened from view.

In some houses there is a regular ritual. The wife rises early to prepare her husband's luck for the coming year. A vessel, like an inverted bell, is procured and into it is placed a book made of palmyra leaves, a freshly washed cloth, flowers of the *konna* tree, and a piece of a mirror. On the top of the collection the wife puts something which is made of gold. Before the husband and other male members of the household get up, they are blindfolded. They are then led to the table where the *kani* has been prepared, and the bandages are removed from their eyes.

Cholera and plague, or any other contagious disease, have no concrete germ origin, but are due to the displeasure of some demon. Suggestion to an Indian of sanitary measures to combat infection, is a waste of words. Weird rites and propitiations are the only methods.

After nightfall, on the road to Travancore, I once left my native "cleaner" to change a tyre while I took a stroll to relieve the monotony of driving. On my return, some ten minutes later, I found the car abandoned, and the tyre untouched. Grazing by the side of the road was a black goat with a yellow cloth tied over its back, which gave me a friendly bleat. As the cleaner had not returned by the time I had attended to the tyre, I drove on, intending to report his disappearance at the first police post. However, I overtook the truant a few miles farther on, and after I had told him a few home truths, and threatened a cut in his wages, he began to whimper: "But, master, the goat! The cholera goat!" When we had put some distance between the goat and the car, the cleaner informed me that there must have been cholera in one of the near-by villages, and instead of sending for the sanitary officer, the local *guru* had doubtless enticed the cholera demon into a yellow cloth. In such case, the cloth, already containing grain, cloves, and red lead,



would be attached to the back of a female black goat, and the animal chased beyond the village boundaries. Superstition, it seems, has developed a community rather than a national spirit.

One morning I heard chanting in my compound, punctuated at short intervals with shrill staccato cries. On going to the door, I saw my horse standing under a pipal tree, with the servants in a ring about him. Around the animal's neck hung a garland of flowers, there were leaves woven together into a little mat on its head, and its sides had been touched up with some red paste. The cook's wife, in this case known as the *matie*, was carrying a pot, held straight out in front of her while she described circles round the horse, and it was she who contributed the sharp cries to the chant of the other servants.

I counted the number of turns the woman made round the horse, and wondered what sort of witchcraft I was watching. After the cook's wife had executed seven circles, the gardener's wife (who must have come in for the occasion, as she did not live in the compound) stepped forward with a lighted candle and began to circle the horse in a similar fashion. I watched three women make seven turns each, after which the horse was divested of his decorations and led back to his stall.

When questioned, the *matie* explained to me that the women had performed *arati* round the horse, because someone had put the evil eye on it. The horse would not eat and was getting very thin, and only the evil eye could account for its low state. It was, therefore, necessary to wave *arati* else the horse might die. It was the first time that I knew that *arati* was performed for the benefit of domestic animals.

This ceremony is performed by married women and dancing girls (prostitutes). Some rice flour is set ablaze on a dish, and carried round the object suffering from the evil eye. At other times a lighted candle is used. The pot which the *matie* carried round my horse contained water, coloured with vermilion.

*Arati* is waved over the gods in the temples, especially by dancing girls. It is also necessary to perform this ceremony at marriages, and over gods who have been taken through the streets for festivals. One never knows what evil eyes

might rest on them, and they are as prone to evil influences as mere mortals. Children who are taken from one town to another, come in for their share of the performance ; while persons of high rank have the ceremony, not once, but many times a day. It is believed that highly placed persons are more subject to the spite and evil intentions of jealous people, and in other days rajas and princes kept dancing girls in their palaces to perform the ceremony.

During one period of her pregnancy a Nair woman has to take tamarind pills, which are placed on the edge of a knife by her brother and pushed into her mouth with a gold ring. Sometimes low-caste exorcists are called in, and to the accompaniment of music and lewd songs, the exorcists draw magic circles and triangles on the ground. Into these designs the expectant mother must throw lighted wicks, while how and where these wicks fall indicate from which direction danger may be expected. All this is done because pregnant women are said to be especially magnetic in their attraction of the evil eye. If any such baleful glance should rest upon the mother, it would affect the unborn child.

Sometimes the woman is anointed with a mixture of milk and cows urine, which is allowed to trickle over her breasts to her navel, where it is caught in a cloth. This symbolizes the free flow of the mother's blood through the umbilical cord.

The exorcists may announce that they have discovered a demon, and that he has revealed himself and threatens harm to the expectant mother. They then proceed to bargain with the demon, whom they presently state to have expressed his willingness to accompany them to their compound on condition that suitable quarters are found for him. In this case it is usual to demand a small continuous payment for the demon's maintenance, while if the exorcists consider their patient sufficiently affluent, they may demand the gift of a piece of land to which they can transfer the demon and properly look after him.

To die in childbirth is extremely unlucky. It delays the soul's progress to future incarnations of a better nature, or to the ultimate Swaraj of Hindu bliss. Owing to some curse, the spirit of a woman who dies in childbirth becomes earth-bound, and is held in the branches of the pipal tree (*ficus*

*religiosa*). During the night this earth-bound spirit assumes the form of a beautiful maid, seeking to revenge herself on man, whom she considers the cause of her death. This wraith is known as the *churel*, and can be distinguished from human women only by the fact that her feet turn backwards. From the boughs of the pipal tree the *churel* selects her victim, and lures him to her. The power of her passion is so strong, that as her would-be material body dissolves at the approach of dawn, she drops her victim lifeless to the ground.

A bad knee-sprain once detained me in the hotel of a South Indian backwater, which was managed by an Indian. To ease the pain and reduce the swelling, I sent my bearer to ask the manager for a hot-water bottle. The bearer returned with a poultice, which he said the manager had insisted upon my using. While I was allowing the poultice to take all the skin off my knee, the manager explained that he always kept tulsi leaves for his friends. He amplified the virtue of the tulsi plant for almost an hour, and wound up by telling me that whoever offered Vishnu a spray of tulsi leaves, that had been dipped in saffron, would become like the god himself and enjoy a share of Vishnu's happiness. Tulsi was a cure for all bodily and mental sufferings, the manager assured me. Certainly, in my case the poultice did its work; the swelling and the pain disappearing—together with the skin.

If a chauffeur has seen an omen on the road, he will often pretend that the road is interrupted farther on and "master" had better turn round and take another route. Perhaps he has seen a deformed man; or a potter or a pig has crossed the road, and to proceed in the face of such warning would be sure to invite the wrath of some demon. If the chauffeur was able to avoid a fatal accident, whatever mission "master" was on would be sure to fail.

Around this sort of superstition tradition has constructed quite a formula. The interpretation often depends on whether the omen is met or overtaken, or whether an animal crosses the road from right to left. For example, to meet one Brahman and two Sudras is a bad omen, but two Brahmans and one Sudra is decidedly auspicious.

A friend of mine in Assam, who wished to concentrate on the points of an interview he was about to have, asked his Hindu secretary to drive his car. The town where the meet-

ing had been arranged was some forty miles from my friend's bungalow, and after covering about half the distance the car collided with, and killed, a monkey. The monkey represents the god Hanuman, and consequently is sacred ; so sacred, indeed, that the exportation of monkeys from India is now forbidden. To the secretary's question : " Don't you think we had better turn back," my friend answered : " Don't be a fool." Later, when my friend failed to carry his point at the meeting, his secretary reminded him that he could have expected nothing better.

Every motorist knows those spiral eddies of dust that are raised along the road by the breeze. The spiral is the vehicle of the dust devil, and on one occasion nearly caused my death. Encountering one of these eddies, at a speed of over fifty miles an hour, my chauffeur swerved to avoid it. What demon or god kept us from turning over in that awful shiver which shook the car from stem to stern, I have no means of knowing. Perhaps two Brahmans and a Sudra had crossed the road farther back, although I had failed to notice them.

The Koravas watch for omens before starting out on one of their house-breaking expeditions.

Water standing perfectly still is a good omen, but it is unfortunate to see widows, pots of milk, a bull bellowing, or a dog urinating. On the other hand, it is very lucky to hear a bull bellowing at the time of the criminal operation. To see a man beating a bull is good when starting, but unlucky at the scene of the crime. Sprinkling urine over the walls and doors of the house one intends to break into facilitates the operation, and sometimes it is well to have the instrument for burgling soldered at its business-end with five metals, to counteract the effect of the evil eye.

Many failures in making " a good haul " are attributed to the evil tongue. The evil tongue means harping on misfortune, talking evil of others, or giving away secrets, and there are several ways of removing its unhappy effect. One is to make a mud figure, and place thorns over its mouth. They who have suffered from the evil tongue then walk round the figure, beating their mouths with their hands. The more noise, the sooner the tongue is silenced.

Cutting the neck of a chicken half-way through, and allowing it to flutter about ; or inserting a piece of hot iron into its

rectum to madden it with pain, are also effective ways of silencing the tongue. If the cock should crow after the chicken's neck has been cut, all calamities will be averted.

The number seven is considered ominous, and a burglary expedition seldom consists of seven men. It is even unlucky to utter the number seven. A man who has just been released from jail, or a newly married man, is unlucky for criminal excursions. Should the number seven be unavoidable when starting out, the house-breaking instrument is considered the eighth member of the gang.

The women of this caste resort to divination, if their husbands are some time absent and they fear the men have been apprehended. A long strand is pulled out of a broom, and at one end of it are tied several smaller strands, which have been dipped in oil. If the strand floats in water, there is no need to worry ; but if it sinks, the wife starts out at once to find her husband.

The eighteenth day of the month is the luckiest day for committing crimes. A successful criminal adventure on this day is sure to be followed by good luck. Sundays, while they are auspicious for weddings, are unlucky for crimes. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays are unlucky until the afternoon for the beginning of burglary, as is also the day of the new moon. Fridays are not suitable for breaking into the homes of Brahmins.

Many snake temples exist, where the reptiles take up their residence, and are fed and looked after by the Brahmin priests. During the month of December thousands of pilgrims visit the snake temples, to propitiate the demons they control. It is said that the priests who officiate at these temples are initiated little by little into snake worship, until they become immune from the venom of the bite. My own opinion is that the venom is extracted, except in a few cases. Where the poison is not extracted, I believe the snakes are kept in a somnolent condition by overfeeding and doses of opium.

An Indian recently submitted an article to the Press, in which he said that snakes were responsible for over four hundred deaths a day. No orthodox Hindu, however, will kill a snake. At the most he would seek the aid of a snake charmer to take the reptile to the jungle.

Apart from his veneration of the snake as a deity, the

Indian has a superstition about killing it. If the necessity arises, the head and eyes must be utterly pulped ; as the superstition is that the likeness of the person who killed it will be photographed and reproduced on the retina of the snake's eye, and its mate able to recognize the person and wreak vengeance.

It is also believed that somewhere in the heart of the jungle exists the real king cobra, who is king over all the so-called king cobras. He who has the courage to approach this king, will be rewarded by the sight of the largest and purest diamond in the world, which the king carries in his mouth.

The snake, owing to its religious and superstitious significance, is often made use of by confidence tricksters. The police of a certain Namya village are still looking for a snake charmer who induced three villagers to pay him for tattooing them, so as to render them immune from snake-bite. At a funeral ceremony which occurred the following day, the tattooer induced one of his clients to hold a venomous reptile. Seeing it bite the villager, the man did not wait to prove his treatment efficacious, and the unfortunate dupe died soon afterwards.

On the other hand there are men of whom rumour says, that while they cannot render one immune, they actually have the power to quell snake-poison. If advised in time, a station-master in a small station on one of the southern railways is supposed to cure snake-bite with some psychic force. The healer requires to know which part of the body has been affected, and the actual time and place of the accident. The most important piece of information, however, is in what direction from the healer the event took place ; whether north, east, south, or west. The story goes that this station-master has cured people four or five hundred miles away, after their condition and the facts concerning it, had been telegraphed to him.

Tenants have a way of getting their own back on a landlord who asks them to vacate property for the non-payment of rent. The tenant simply has a god placed in one of the rooms ; since if any room in a house is dedicated to the service of a god, such a house cannot be desecrated by further occupancy. The ruins of a house near Cannanore were pointed out to me as the

result of this superstition. An ejection order had been served on a tenant by his landlord, but when the owner went to take over his property, he found that a shrine had been erected in one of the rooms.

An orthodox Hindu will seldom permit any object to be taken out of his house after sundown. It is supposed that at sunset the gods settle down for the night on furniture, ornaments, pots and pans, and if any object is removed it robs the household of its gods. For this reason (a very convenient one at times), Hindus object to paying bills in the evening. One never knows what god might be hustled out with the money.

If a Kondh meets a woman, whether married or unmarried, when he is starting out on a hunting expedition, he will turn back. He will then make a fresh start, waving every woman that he meets out of his way. If a Kondh woman is menstruating, her husband, sons and brothers will not hunt game until her period is over. The men believe that they will come across no animals at such a time.

The Kondh will not kill a crow because it would amount to killing a friend. According to one of the folk tales of the caste, soon after the creation of the world there lived a family of an aged man, a woman, and five children. Plague carried off the children one after the other in quick succession, and the parents being too old and too poor to take the necessary steps for the cremation of the bodies, they were obliged to throw them on the ground a little distance from their home. Vishnu then appeared to them one night in a dream, and promised to create the crow so that it might devour the dead bodies.

Many of the aborigines believe that they can transform themselves into tigers or snakes. Half the soul is supposed to leave the body, and in the guise of a tiger or a snake it may kill an enemy or satisfy its hunger by feeding on cattle in the jungle. During this time such people are said to remain dull and listless, and to shirk any sort of work. It is also believed that the soul wanders during sleep, when it may enter the body of a tiger or some other wild animal.

A Brahman priest is sometimes employed to ascertain whether a child to be born will be lucky or unlucky. If it is decided that it is to be unlucky, the barber is ordered to

propitiate the village deity and the nine planets. He also offers something to the tutelary deity.

No lullaby should be sung while the child is being rocked in his cradle for the first time ; any show of rejoicing being likely to invite the attention of evil spirits who are envious of human happiness. On the other hand, all the beneficent gods are continuously worshipped when there is a new arrival in the family, because, " gods and children go where they are made much of."

The floors of houses should be washed on Tuesdays and Fridays with cow-dung water, to remove any impurity or pollution. The cow-dung is left to dry on the floors, and later it is mopped off with clear water. The Hindus believe that when water has touched cow-dung it becomes sacred.

The ash with which holy men decorate themselves is cow-dung ash. The dung is kneaded with the hands to remove bits of stick and stone, and is then covered with chaff and burned. The ashes obtained in this manner are the sacred ashes of Siva, and for some obscure reason they are supposed to be highly magnetized.

The Hindus eat their food off plantain (banana) leaves. When the leaves are removed after a meal, the place where they rested (the Indians usually eat off the floor) must be purified with cow-dung water.

The mud walls of village houses are coated with cow-dung before they are whitewashed. If this is omitted, tragedy will enter the house.

I have already mentioned, with regard to castes and Brahmans, why certain people are under pollution at certain times. There is, however, a time when everyone is under pollution, namely after an eclipse. Immediately after such an event all must bathe, and the houses must be purified with cow-dung water to avert calamity.

The Indian believes that a very evil influence attaches to words of abuse, and prefers a beating to vilification. He will often stay with the master who works him to death, but he will leave the employer who hurls abusive words at him, even if the pay is better and the work less arduous.

Indian vituperation is supposed to have the power of cursing the individual towards whom it is directed, and the fear of the word may have its root in magical formulæ which are



always voiced. In cursing the ancestors there is sometimes an allusion made to the grandfather's tail, and not only does this suggest grandfather's Darwinian descent, but it brings misfortune upon the grandson who is being denounced. The only thing which will stop the flow of rhetoric is the end of the vilifier's inventive genius.

To call an Indian "a son-in-law" is the worst of all insults : it is the equivalent in English of the term "son of a bitch."

## CHAPTER XXIV

### MAGIC

**E**UROPEAN investigators have speculated on the relations of magic and religion, but the consensus of opinion in the West follows the French school of thought as expounded by Durkheim, and which defines magic as those rites which do not form part of an organized cult. Magical rites, according to the French school, are anti-social. Many English students, however, notably Frazer, think differently ; and Frazer asserts that magic is a rudimentary science based on a theory of natural causation. Occultists, again, maintain that there is no magic, and that anything which can be imagined is a fact.

There is no doubt that magic strikes at the very foundation of the religious and social life of India. Tippu Sultan, in his wars against the English, employed all the best magicians of his day, both Hindu and Mohammedan, to encourage and protect his troops against the assaults of the infidels. The failure of their magic was often the excuse for their death, and in the end Tippu's magicians had to admit that the magic of the enemy was such as to render their force impotent.

An Indian who criticized the judgment of the magistrate in a recent murder trial in India, must have agreed with Tippu's men that magic could overcome magic. I refer to the trial of Zumthailand Naga, who was finally sentenced to the extreme penalty of the law for murdering Khurangthan Naga at Silehar. In defence, Zumthailand pleaded that he had committed the murder because Khurangthan had already killed four villagers by black magic, and was threatening to kill others, amongst whom was Zumthailand's brother. He substantiated the fact that after quarrelling with Khurangthan his brother became seriously ill.

Although there is no excuse for such a murder, even in India, the judge recommended the murderer to the clemency

of the Governor-in-Council. This recommendation was criticized by the Indian already mentioned because, as he put it, "there is no spell in black magic so strong but that someone can be found who will work a stronger spell." I suppose he intended to infer that a man who committed a murder, instead of trying to find a second magician who could overcome the spell of the first, deserved no mercy.

I watched a scene in south India, not far from Coimbatore, where rival magicians pitted their powers against each other. Heavy bets were laid, and taken, by partisans of the rivals.

In this particular case the arena was in the woods, where a fire had been lighted. A very large circle had been outlined on the ground with chalk, and in its centre the challenger placed his sandal, defying his opponent to move it.

As the opponent advanced into the circle to pick up the sandal, he appeared to strain every muscle and to move only with great physical exertion. The challenger was a little less agitated, but his muscles stood out like the muscles of a wrestler and his half-naked body glistened with perspiration. Advance and strain, retire and relax, seemed to be the sequence of the opponents' movements for more than an hour, when suddenly with a terrific effort and blood spurting from his nose, the challenged party managed to pick up the sandal.

An onlooker, who denied partisanship, told me that one of the magicians was a Palli casteman, and that all these contests arose from an old legend which is said to be preserved in the records of a temple at Conjeevaram.

A European, who was also present, related to me how he had seen a similar contest, which had a different result. When the challenger had worn his opponent to a shred, the sandal, with no other volition than its owner's power, got up from the ground and so soundly whacked the opponent that he had to flee from the ground. I hinted to my informer that native toddy was quite strong in some districts, but Indians present confirmed the story. They admitted, however, that such power was exceptional, and if used for exhibition purposes would probably disappear.

One of the Palli legends mentions a car festival (Juggernaut), at which magic spells were put upon the Palli's car and it stuck in the mud. Relays of human beings could not move it, and even teams of elephants were unsuccessful.

One night, then, the Palli goddess appeared to one of the elders in a dream, and told him to obtain the aid of one of their own caste who was then Prime Minister in a distant state. By his clairvoyant powers the Prime Minister was able to discover that the spells had been worked by a rival caste of weavers, the Saniyans, and that thousands of imps had been called up to lock the wheels of the Palli car. Furthermore, not only were these imps locking the wheels, but they were able to neutralize all efforts at counter-spells. The Prime Minister, harassed by the imps, spent the night in fasting and prostration before the goddess, and the goddess spoke to him and demanded a blood sacrifice. The sacrifice required was to be a woman pregnant with her first child. The Pallis were horrified at such a demand, but as banishment threatened the whole caste unless the car was moved, the Prime Minister consented to sacrifice his wife and unborn babe. By this sacrifice the spells were removed, and the goddess, to show her appreciation, gave the Prime Minister such power that he was able to move all the following cars in one journey. This he did with a rope harnessed to his nose.

A medical missionary acquaintance of mine had to admit that all the powers of his church were unable to fathom the mystery behind the following story.

The mission had organized a leprosarium, and the living quarters were actually in the compound of the establishment. The missionary's wife had employed as sewing *ayah*, a young Christian convert, and this *ayah*, as she sat at work one evening on the verandah, was driven into the house by a shower of pebbles. The same thing occurred the following day, and with no apparent cause. Guards of lepers were then posted to watch, but they were unable to discover anything. The doctor thereupon took the matter up seriously. Watchers were posted quite close to the verandah, with another line of watchers at the same distance from the first. Nevertheless, the evening shower of stones continued. When the sewing-work was finished the *ayah* left, and the phenomenon ceased. Some months later, however, after

the woman had been recalled for further work the manifestation recommenced.

The missionary never discovered the cause of the pebbles.

On the Malabar coast, the story goes, the demon who produces the shower of stones is an annoying juvenile jokester, black as ink, and whose powers, with the aid of *mantrams*, can be put to good or evil use. He is known as Kuttichchattan (the boy satan), and no thief would dare to touch the jewellery or household goods which he is guarding. Like many boys, he has a voracious appetite, and if not sufficiently fed he soon lets his magician know his capabilities for mischief. What he is capable of doing to his victims, Kuttichchattan will do to his magician if he is not properly treated. When on evil bent he will set fire to his victim's house, or turn his food into excrement and his drink into urine, and make his bed about as comfortable as a cactus hedge. This boy satan is a dangerous imp to invoke. His invocation invariably reacts on the magician, and such penalties, it is said, as sterility and mental derangement are the consequences of his employment.

Certain castes believe that mischievous spirits can be tempted and caught by the smell of appetizing food. While they are devouring the food, the lid can be put on the pot and the spirit transferred to other quarters.

In an incident reported by the Nagpur correspondent of one of the Bombay papers, it is related that a fourteen-year-old Hindu girl was harassed by unseen hands. A mischievous spirit smeared the girl with lamp black; the utensils of her house were flung from the cupboard to the floor, cups rearranging themselves first in a row and then one above the other. Clothes, in a locked box, were torn to ribbons. This continued for over a week, when in desperation the parents sent for a *sadhu* (holy man), who soon expelled the mischievous imp.

These *sadhus* are becoming a positive nuisance to the authorities, and to those who do not care to have Brahmanic theories and teachings hurled at them from every street corner. Practically nude and unbelievably dirty, they are a menace to public health and decency, and they fairly litter the streets of Bombay after their return from the June festival at Nassik, upon which they descend like flies from

all parts of India. How the people can continue to live in mortal dread of the magic powers of these diseased beggars is beyond the imagination of any normal being.

The following was narrated to me in all seriousness by a young woman in Bombay.

A *sadhu* had fallen in love with a young Anglo-Indian girl, who was the school-friend of the girl telling the story. Every day the naked holy man went to the compound of the girl's parents to beg, as an excuse to keep his eye on the object of his desire. A favourable opportunity occurred one day when the girl was alone in the house, and the *sadhu* asked her for a lock of her hair. Having been reared in Bombay, where one hears so much about the magic powers of *sadhus*, the girl was terrified and did not dare order the man to leave the compound.

Telling him to wait a moment, she went into the house and there she managed to pull herself to some extent together. She picked up a pair of scissors and snipped some of the fringe from the edge of a Kashmir mat, and this she wrapped up in a piece of silk and tied with a long string. The visit of the *sadhu*, however, so obsessed her, that she mentioned the incident to her brother. He, of course, absolutely ridiculed the idea of the *sadhu's* power, and promised to attend to the creature if he returned to the compound.

The same night the brother was awakened by chanting, and from his window he could see a figure with its back to the gate, apparently just moving away. To his surprise then, the fringed Kashmir mat floated out of the house and spread itself on the ground, and as the figure moved, so the mat followed. A short distance from the gate the *sadhu*, for it was he, became a raving maniac, having discovered the deception of the hair. His sudden change from placidity to fury so fascinated the brother, he was unable for the moment to recover his wits and chase the lunatic. But at last he found himself with a golf club in his hand, bounding down the stairs.

When he overtook the *sadhu*, the man was calling down vengeance on the girl who had tricked him. A policeman, who had been attracted by the noise, prevented the brother from using his club too effectively.

How much truth there is in the story I am unable to say, but there are at any rate several authorities for the principle.

Frazer says in his chapter on sympathetic magic in the *Golden Bough* : " From these principles (contagious and sympathetic magic) namely the law of similarity, the magician infers that he can produce any effect he desires merely by imitating it ; from the second he infers that whatever he does to a material object will equally affect the person with whom the object was once in contact, whether it formed part of his body or not." According to this line of reasoning, therefore, the mat having been in contact with the girl would have brought her out to the *sadhu*, could he have kept his temper and continued to chant.

Whether an object once in connection with a person can be worked upon to bring misfortune to its former owner I do not know. I only know that because of this belief certain Indian castes (as I have mentioned in the chapters on caste) bury or burn the after-birth immediately after the child is born. It is also a fact that certain of the Indian magicians will collect the nail parings and the hair of an enemy, and roll them into a ball with wax, which ball is buried with some infernal rite to cause the death of the victim.

An Indian friend, incidentally, told me that he believed that super-salesmanship, or the creating of a spurious demand for non-essentials, could be linked to magic ; and that this magic had caused the commercial crisis which the world is shouldering to-day. If this is true, it would tend to confirm the statement of the French school that magic is anti-social.

Again to quote Frazer : " Regarded as a set of precepts which human beings observe to accomplish their ends it may be called practical magic. At the same time primitive magicians know magic only on its practical side, they never analyse the mental processes on which the practice is based." Allowing for the truth of this, the Indian *sadhu*, being the primitive being, knows only the practical side of magic, and that, backed up by the sensuality of his creed, tends to a mischievous and licentious use of what Frazer would term " a natural law."

As recently as July 15th last year the Associated Press of India circulated from Patna the story of passengers on a Bengal and North-west train being annoyed by magic. The story was headed " Juggler's Spirit of Mischief." It recounted how a train, running at full speed between Shahpur-Patari and

Mahudin-Nagar, came to an abrupt halt near a pipal tree. In the thick foliage of this tree passengers and the guard were said to have seen uncanny movements. There was no obstruction on the line, no trouble with the engine, and no one had pulled the alarm signal. Then, as suddenly as the train had stopped, and without any intervention of the driver, it started again. The people in the locality firmly believe in the presence of a juggler's ghost in the pipal tree. And the juggler, they say, has not lost his art by death, but continues to practise his tricks to the terror of the people. The ghost appears to resent any interference ; a villager, who tried to exorcise it with religious rites, being knocked senseless and having to lie in bed for months.

The following, which happened in H.H. the Nizam's country, was printed in the *Madras Mail* :

" Belief in the science of alchemy has numerous adherents in this country, and like the necromancers in the middle ages, many *sadhus* claim to be in the possession of the secret of transmuting the baser metals into gold. Cases of *sadhus*, or people posing as *sadhus*, making capital out of this belief, are not infrequent.

" A case which is now being investigated by the Hyderabad City Police, affords a fine example of alchemy as the medium of the confidence trick. It is alleged that a *sadhu* took full advantage of the desire of a *mawari* (merchant) Brahman Lachminarayan, to multiply his gold sevenfold.

" About a fortnight ago a *sadhu*, in the course of his daily round for alms, visited Lachminarayan's shop, and on receiving a few coins was so pleased that he volunteered to teach his benefactor the art of alchemy in return. The *mawari* jumped at the offer and the *sadhu* set to work.

" A quantity of quicksilver was procured at the request of the *sadhu* who put it into a crucible. Into this he squeezed a lemon and added the leaf of some shrub or tree which is supposed to be known only to alchemists, and to have magic properties.

" To create confidence, the *sadhu* asked the *mawari* to mix the ingredients and placed the crucible in a charcoal fire. When it was withdrawn it was found that the mixture had turned into a lump of pure silver. Placing this into the wondering *mawari*'s hand, the *sadhu* left, not before he had



accepted an invitation to return on the following day and give a lesson in manufacturing gold.

"The next day the *sadhu* put into the crucible a mixture made up of small pieces of gold, silver and brass, some opium and saffron, and reduced this to ash. He then mixed the ash with some more pieces of gold, silver and brass and poured over it the juice of the magic leaf pronouncing 'holy is its name in heaven.' From this was produced a nugget of pure gold which passed the test.

"The *mawari* was immensely pleased, and when the *sadhu* appeared again for the third time, and offered to multiply sevenfold any quantity of gold his benefactor was willing to give him, the *mawari* willingly agreed. The *sadhu's* only condition was that the *mawari* should make arrangements to feed five hundred Brahmans in the time-honoured fashion. This was readily agreed to.

"The shopkeeper then produced articles of gold, said to be worth two thousand five hundred rupees. The *sadhu* bundled them up into a piece of cloth, and apparently with a few pieces of brass and other mysterious ingredients, placed the collection in an earthen pot, closed it hermetically and buried it in a pit filled with live coals.

"After giving strict instructions not to disturb the pot for two days, the *sadhu* left, promising to return on the third day and pour a potfull of gold into his benefactor's lap. Of course, the alchemist failed to return and the anxious *mawari*, unable to bear the suspense any longer, opened the pot and found it full of emptiness."

A European doctor, who has worked amongst the Indians for years, told me the following story, which to his practical mind was so complete a mystery and shock that it unnerved him for quite a few days. His psychology was such that he could not leave it a mystery, while, being personal, he could not dismiss it as nonsense. Either he had to accept the Indian explanation, which undermined all his theories, or he had to leave it as inexplicable.

The doctor had been absent from his headquarters for about a week, visiting an up-country patient. The morning after his return to his station he was driving to his hospital as usual when he saw his colleague, a Parsi doctor, crossing the road. Wishing to inquire about a patient they were both interested

in, he told his chauffeur to slow up, but on looking at his watch he saw that he was already late for an appointment and, countermanding the order, he continued on to the hospital.

That afternoon, when he went to visit one of his private patients, the doctor met the patient's wife and daughter who were just leaving to go to a funeral. On his enquiring who was dead, the astounding answer of his patient's wife almost bowled him over. She told him that his friend, the Parsi doctor, had died the previous Saturday, and it was then Monday. The other went on to explain that, owing to certain members of the Parsi doctor's family being absent, it had been decided to postpone the funeral until they arrived; a very unusual thing in India, where burial or cremation follows closely on the heels of death.

In giving me the story, the doctor mentioned certain peculiarities about the Parsi doctor and his clothes which would identify him anywhere. The dead man was considerably above average height, and walked with a limp, as if he slightly dragged one leg. His sun helmet was known to everyone as he invariably carried a fishing-fly stuck into the pugaree (sash) of his helmet, while his old Norfolk-jacket, worn thin, showed a red pad down the seam which protected his spine from sun-stroke. The morning the Parsi had crossed the road he was dressed as usual. One fact the European doctor stressed was that his chauffeur had also seen the man.

According to the Indian theory, the Parsi was the victim of a stroke which produced all the medical symptoms of death, but in reality was not dead. His physical force had been suspended, and in this state he realized what was about to happen to him, and that he was to be buried; wherefore he tried to concentrate on the doctor as the person most likely to help him. In fact the Parsi's thoughts, so the Indians insisted, had produced what is known as materialization in his friend's consciousness. This theory, however, did not explain the chauffeur having seen him.

The barber caste of Travancore is sceptical of the medical signs of death, and insists upon death being confirmed by magic. When the burial party is conducting the corpse to the grave, a halt is called and the bier is placed on the ground. By arrangement, a sorcerer meets the procession at the halting

place and endeavours to resuscitate the corpse. Failing to do this, as is always the case, the burial is proceeded with.

An interesting example of how the legends of blood and death have become part and parcel of the daily lives of the Hindus, was told me by the owner of a coffee estate in the Nilgheri Hills. I had accepted the owner's invitation to see that sight which rivals cherry blossom time in Japan—namely, hundreds of coffee-bushes seemingly covered with a fall of scented snow. And like snow, this beauty drifts away in a day or two as a dream passes out of the mind. While we enjoyed this brief moment of beauty, my friend told me of an outbreak in his coolie-lines.

By some mistake a Kurumba coolie had got in with the Toda coolies on the estate. Now these two castes are so antagonistic as to refuse all intercourse, and the Toda lives in mortal dread of the Kurumba. One of the Toda women, then, having died (as medical evidence proved, of pneumonia), the Toda accused the Kurumba, first, of ravishing his woman, and then, by some occult power, of removing her liver and thus causing her death. The Kurumbas are supposed to have the power of killing the Todas by magic, which power in this instance was said to have made the woman's wound close without leaving a trace.

According to the old legend which explains this power, *On*, the creator of buffalos, being mightily grieved at the death of his son, decided to follow his son to the land of the dead. In preparation, he issued an invitation to all his dependents to come and bid him farewell, and, except for a few, all those invited came and were blessed by *On*. The absent ones *On* cursed; especially Arsair, the buffalos of the Toda's sacred dairy, which animals, together with all their people, were doomed to die by witchcraft at the hands of the Kurumbas.

The following letter, which appears to have been written by a perplexed Indian, was published by *The Madras Mail*.

"Sir," the letter reads, "A short time ago an article appeared in *The Madras Mail* stating how an Indian woman had had *mantrams* cast upon her by an interested third party in order to turn her against her husband." The letter goes on to relate how the result had been achieved and how the existence of the spell was traced, and continues: "Are these things

really possible ? Apparently they are. But what exactly are these *mantrams* and how are they made to work ?

“ I have in mind a distressing instance in which a bright-hearted Indian lad has been brought to a state of utter dejection, with all his natural impulses crushed under this wretched and malevolent force. That at any rate is the cause which is attributed to his condition by a dealer in the occult who was approached in this connection, and who gave such an accurate delineation of the circumstances of the case, as to admit of no possibility of doubt.

“ The boy appears to have turned absolutely against one for whom he had the deepest affection, and the man whose opinion was solicited, stated that the *mantram* had been cast with that express object. Asked if it was possible to exorcise this malignant force, he said it was, and that there were three grades of cure.

“ The first of these costs twenty-five rupees, and it may be effective, or it may not. The second costs fifty rupees, and this will be effective, but it will not preclude the possibility of the *mantrams* being cast upon the subject again. The third grade costs two hundred rupees, and with this the influence cannot be brought upon the subject again. These two latter figures are prohibitive to the party concerned.”

The above letter was signed “ Rinan.”

Only in India could such a letter be written, and the worst of it is that the writer, while a little short of the power to reason and analyse, does not seem to be uneducated. If anyone is undecided about the helpless condition of India, such a letter should dispel his doubt. While charlatans can carry on a lucrative business as “ dealers in the occult,” and can force their absurd suggestions into the minds of apparently well-bred people, it looks as if India has some distance to travel before she catches up with the remote outposts of civilization.

Perhaps a “ dealer ” who by his “ occult ” power can suggest to the mind of his client that a little spell worth twenty-five rupees is worth two hundred rupees, is not to be despised. He might pull the world out of her present slough of despond with a *mantram* for the regulators of finance and another for the tax collector.

In one of my chapters on caste I mention the fact that lepers are never cremated. This is because the weird belief

that a leper never completely dies, cannot be erased from the minds of the lower-caste Indians, among whom the leper is usually found.

I will give here a letter, written from Bangalore City to the *Madras Mail*, describing one of the rain ceremonies. Many other rain ceremonies are tried first in the case of drought. The leper ceremony is the last resort, and is only performed when the drought has been prolonged for some months. The letter reads as follows. "In this district the much-needed rains have been withheld. From a hill-top one can see the clouds forming and coming down in torrents in several directions, travelling along and then as if almost of set intent, steering off after approaching within three miles.

"Now the local population are about to try the time-honoured remedy of digging up a leper and either burning the corpse or throwing it into the river, or to the jackals. They say that such a corpse has not decayed after a month like others. A leper should be buried with a quantity of salt or rain will be withheld until this is done."

The use of salt may be a superstition in certain cases, but it is not general. An Indian of one of the hill castes told me that the leper ceremony almost equalled human sacrifice. I suppose the belief that a leper never quite dies, explains why this is so.

## CHAPTER XXV

### CEREMONIES

**T**HE Nayars, living a few miles from Calicut, have a yearly ceremony in commemoration of the goddess Bhagavati, whom, legend says, slew the Asura gigantic demon. The festival usually lasts for seven days.

The temple servants sweep the temple, and sprinkle it with *panchagavyam* (in this case cow-urine, cow-dung, and leaves of the belva tree) over which magic verses have been said. After the morning worship, a man arrives and presents the silver flag of the temple to the temple servant. The flag has been in the custody of the man who presents it since the previous festival. If the custodian, owing to hard times, has been a pawnbroker, the flag is redeemed from him by a member of the caste, and passed to some representative of the temple. The *Pisharodi* (temple servant) receives the flag, and hoists it on the east side of the temple. The image of the goddess is then carried through the streets. Formerly she was carried on an elephant, and she still is, if the caste can afford it. If an elephant cannot be had, men carry the goddess on their shoulders.

On the third and fourth days of the ceremony men of the washerman caste beat the tom-toms, and announce that people will be fed at the temple before the procession starts. These washermen live on the bounty of the temple. The temple umbrella is given to a casteman who makes umbrellas, for any repairs which are required. The temple sword is given to the goldsmith for the same purpose.

On the morning of the seventh day a devil-dancer dances before the temple, waving an umbrella from side to side like a tight-rope walker. He receives a sack of rice for his performance.

On the evening of the seventh day a very gorgeous procession passes through the streets. They often manage

to obtain one or two elephants for this occasion, and on an elephant's back the priest is mounted, dressed in gay colours and garlands of flowers. The flowers for this ceremony are red. Long golden discs, belonging to the temple, hang down on the elephant's forehead. A Nayar casteman walks in front of the priest's elephant, carrying the sword, and on his wrist is a bracelet of tiny bells which jingle as he waves the sword about. Men, who seem to add nothing to the ceremony but an appalling noise, spin round like whirling dervishes. Huge lights are carried, fed from batteries supported on men's shoulders. The Tiyans carry cocoanuts slung on a pole, which are later to be presented to the temple. The toddy-makers carry large earthen pots of foaming toddy, which are also presents for the temple. The toddy is most acceptable, for a big night follows the final parade. Everyone who takes part in the ceremony receives rice or goat meat.

For the seven days, men, who are the chief officiators, are under a vow to eat but once a day and not to cohabit with any women.

When the procession returns to the temple on the final night, women of the Tiyana caste accompany it bearing plates on their heads which contain rice, plantain leaves, pieces of broken cocoanut and a burning wick. There is a pit at one side of the temple grounds, round which the women walk three times. Completing the third round, they throw the contents of their plates into the pit. When all the plates have been emptied, the women form a line and march to the enclosure where the goddess has been stood up for the occasion. They put the plates on the ground before the idol with a profound salaam. They tell the image that they have placed their offering in the pit, and they hope she will make the land fertile and the crops abundant.

Kuttichattan, the boy satan, and his friend, the demon, Gulikan, walk up and down the temple compound in hideous make-up. Kuttichattan's face is painted a brilliant red, his long hair is wired and arranged with glittering ornaments, and bangles cover his arms from the shoulder to the wrist. A wooden arrangement is placed round him, over which hangs a red skirt fairly plastered with ornaments. Long feathers depend from his waist to imitate a tail, and other

feathers wave over his head. His friend, Gulikan the demon, is made grotesquely terrible by a huge painted head pulled on over his own and a neck about a yard long. By means of a string under his costume he moves the wooden head, and extends a disgustingly spotted tongue out of a ferocious, painted mouth. These two put on a dance which must be exhausting considering the weight of their trappings.

The temple grounds resemble the side-shows of a circus. Everything seems to be going on at once. Cocks are being sacrificed, trees are being worshipped, devil dancers are uttering wild yells, oracular power has descended on certain men who are roaring prophecies, *mantrams* are being chanted, and rice is being distributed. Most of the toddy has been drunk, and the people are beginning to show the effect of it.

At a signal from the chief priest everyone is hustled out of the temple grounds, except for the priests and the temple servants, for the real ceremony is about to begin. The real ceremony is blood sacrifice. When all the enclosures have been cleared, each of the four owners of the temple (known as *Uralas*) hands over a goat to the chief priest. They depart at once after making the offering, and for the reason that secrecy must be maintained. Indeed, the people and the priests deny the sacrifice; insisting upon something they call a "mystic secret," but with no sacrifice accompanying it.

The priest, however, puts on a red silk costume for the occasion and, taking a chopper in his hand, drives the goats into the temple. He shuts his assistants out of the sacrifice-room and, standing at the east end but facing west, he cuts the heads off the goats, one after the other, all the while chanting *mantrams*. Several cocks are then sacrificed, which had been penned up in a corner of the room until the goats were dispatched. Over the dead bodies the priest sprinkles charcoal powder and saffron.

What follows is, perhaps, the mystic secret. The body of one goat is dragged out of the temple by the waiting assistants, who have been blindfolded, and taken three times round the temple to the accompaniment of *mantrams*. After the third round the assistants remove their bandages, and cook some of the goat's flesh with rice. This mixture, with a lot of saffron powder, is then buried in the ground. Presently the priest, who seems to have become mad, runs wildly round the temple



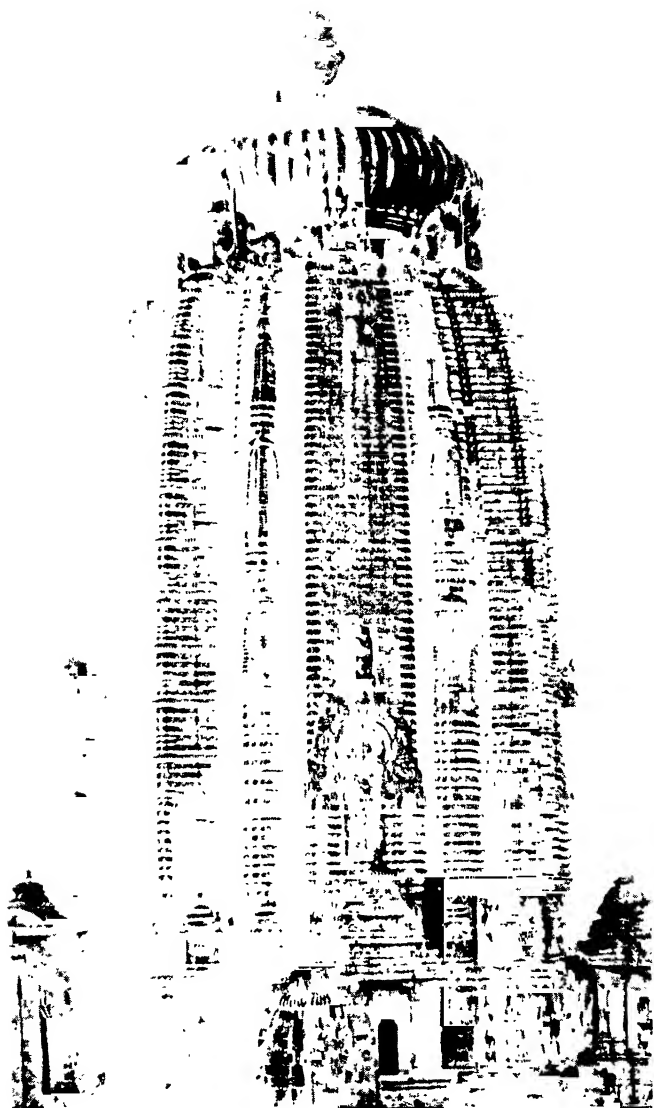
scattering rice and sputtering *mantrams*. After this last outburst of insanity, the priest enters the temple with his assistants, and there they remain for the night.

The temple is thoroughly cleaned by the assistants before they leave, and the people enter for worship in the morning as if nothing had happened.

A cock festival occurs each year at Cranganore, in Malabar. It is dedicated to Kali (Siva's wife), who in this case presides over cholera, smallpox, and infectious diseases. The priests attached to the temple are not the usual Brahmans, but a sect called Adigals. All pilgrims visiting the temple on the occasion of the cock festival are safeguarded from any infectious disease during the coming year, and consequently, they flock there by thousands from all parts of Malabar. On the way they must sing obscene songs, make filthy gestures, and hurl vile names at all the people they meet; women especially. If they spare anyone in this respect, their pilgrimage will be useless. Gallons of toddy must also be drunk during the journey.

For some unknown reason the offering of pepper is very acceptable to the goddess, and it is said that the festival is one continuous sneeze. Pepper can be obtained from the girls at the temple, who weigh it out and sell it. Obscene language must be flung at the girls while one is making the purchase. In former times it was believed that if anyone suffering from a lingering disease could be weighed against pepper before the goddess, he would be cured at once.

The greater the number of cocks sacrificed, the more auspicious the ceremony. The men herd round the spot where the sacrifice is to be made, trying to officiate in it as much as possible. One man holds the cock, while another pulls out its neck as far as possible, frequently cracking the bones, and chops off its head with a knife. The blood gushes forth all day long, until the entire temple yard is running with gore. Pilgrims arriving late have actually to wade in blood to make their sacrifice. The cries of the dying cocks are maddening, and the place smells like an *abattoir*. Fortunately the temple doors are closed to worshippers for some days following the ceremony, until the evidences of it have been removed. On the return journey the pilgrims must use no obscene language, but must go home quietly without further demonstration.



A LINGAM TEMPLE



In another cock ceremony in Cochin State worshippers are supposed to pollute the shrine by urinating and evacuating on the idol before proceeding to slaughter the cocks. On this occasion toddy is used instead of the so-called holy water.

It must be understood, of course, that all these disgusting acts are done with the utmost religious feeling and fervour.

The festival of Kottiyur, in north Malabar, takes place in the forest at the foot of the Wynad hills. It is held in July, during the worst of the monsoon rains. *The Gazetteer of Malabar* describes it as follows : " The Nambudiri priests live in a little wayside temple at Kottiyur, but the true shrine is a quarter of a mile away in the forest across one of the feeder streams of the Valarpattanam River. For eleven months in the year, the scene is inconceivably desolate and dreary ; but during the month of Edavam (May-June) upwards of 50,000 Nayars and Tiyans from all parts of Malabar throng the shrine for the twenty-eight days of the annual festival. During the rest of the year, the temple is given up to the revels of Siva and Parvati ; the impious Hindu who dares to intrude is consumed instantly to ashes. The two great ceremonies are the Neyyattam and the Elanirattam, the pouring of *ghi* (clarified butter) and the pouring of the milk of the green cocoanut. The former is performed by the Nayars, who attend the festival first, and the latter by the Tiyans. In May, all roads lead to Kottiyur, and towards the middle of the month the *ghi* pourers, as the Nayar pilgrims are called, who have spent the previous four weeks in fasting and purificatory rites, assemble in small shrines subordinate to the Kottiyur temple. Thence, clad in white, and bearing each upon his head a pot of *ghi*, they set forth in large bodies headed by a leader. At Manattana the pilgrims from all parts of Malabar meet, and thence to Kottiyur the procession is unbroken. However long their journey, the pilgrims must eat only once, and the more filthy their language, the more orthodox is their conduct. As many as five thousand pots of *ghi* are poured over the *lingam* every year. After the Nayyattam ceremony, the Nayars depart, and it is the turn of the Tiyans. Their preparations are similar to those of the Nayars, and their language en route is even more startling. Eruvatti, near Kedirur, is the place where most of them assemble for their pilgrimage, and their green cocoanuts are presented gratis by the country people as an offering to

the temple. The Elanirattam ceremony begins at midnight and the pilgrims heap up their cocoanuts in front of the shrine continuously till the evening of the same day. Each Tiyan then marches thrice round the heap and falls prostrate before the *lingam* ; and a certain Nayar sub-caste removes the husks preparatory to the spilling of the milk. The festival finally closes with a mysterious ceremony, in which *ghi* and *mantrams* play a great part, performed for two days consecutively by the presiding Nambudiri, and Kottiyur is then deserted for another year.

The Ganjam Paidis sacrifice goats and sheep at the local temples. Since they are a polluting caste, they must pass their offerings for sacrifice to the priest and stand beyond polluting distance of the temple door. Before they leave the spot on which they stand to watch the sacrifice, they must take a pinch of the earth with them. When they return home they place the earth on a clean cloth, put the cloth on the floor, and place before it the articles prepared as offerings to the god Takurani (a village deity).

Sorcerers are consulted if any member of the caste is seriously ill. The sorcerer goes to the house of the patient, and draws a square, divided into several compartments, on the floor with rice. In each compartment he puts small pieces of money, while on one side of the square a dish of cooked rice is placed. A fowl is then sacrificed and its blood is poured round the dish, and into the dish the sorcerer throws grains of rice severally, repeating the name of a god or goddess with each grain. If the rice sinks, it is believed that the illness was caused by the god whose name was mentioned with the sunken grain. It is necessary, then, to propitiate the god in whatever way the deity, through the sorcerer, demands.

At the ceremony of sacrifice to the local goddess at Attur, in the Madura district, someone goes about collecting all the buffalos which have been dedicated to the goddess during two years, and because of this have been permitted to graze unmolested in the fields. When the animals are rounded up, one is selected and placed in the temple. The chosen one is garlanded and decorated for the occasion, and a member of the Chakkiliyan caste gives the animal three cuts on the throat, after he has purified himself for the ceremony. The privilege of actually killing the animal belongs to the head of

the family of the sacrificer at the former festival. If a dispute arises, everyone present falls on the buffalo and helps to slay it.

When any calamity overtakes a family in south Canara, the *bhutas* (demons or ghosts) must be propitiated. *Bhuta* propitiation is a mixture of ancestor and devil worship. A Nalka, or Parava (devil dancer), is called in to perform the ceremony, which has three names, *kola*, *nema*, and *agchu tambila*. The names of the *bhutas* are legion. There are village demons; jungle demons; malevolent spirits of deceased scoundrels; spirits of those who have died a violent death; demons who haunt houses to cause sickness and misfortune; and demons who play tricks, such as throwing stones and spoiling personal property.

On the *kola* day a group of *bhutas* are worshipped at the same time, and a Brahman fixes the auspicious occasion for the celebration. Jewels, rice, or whatever is to be offered to the *bhutas*, are placed on cots, which the people, after forming a procession, carry through the streets. Each cot represents a *bhuta*, and the gifts vary according to the importance of the particular demon. A seven-branched torch is usually kept burning near the cot of the principal *bhuta*. The procession halts at some chosen place, where rice has been piled up in a conical shape, and over the pile pieces of banana are scattered. Round the pile leaves are arranged, in which cocoanut is placed.

The *pujari* (temple priest), wearing a silver belt and a lot of imitation jewellery, worships the *bhutas* and offers them the gifts. When the priest's service is over the devil dancers, dressed as demons, dance round the pile, singing songs to propitiate *bhutas*. According to the dancers, demons are supposed to wear hideous masks, colossal head-dresses made of metal, feathers, cloth, paper ornaments, pieces of bone and long streamers, a metal collar with a fringe of bone, several bracelets on the upper arms, cloth ruffles on the wrists, and a long grass skirt. The dancers whirl round, until they finally drop exhausted. The priest then tells the assembly that the *bhutas* are quite satisfied and the cots bearing the gifts are borne away until the next propitiation.

*Nema* is a private ceremony, held in the house of anyone who can afford it and who wishes to propitiate the *bhutas*.

*Agelu-tambila* is a sort of worship offered to one *bhuta* only (the *baidierlu*).

When a person is possessed by a *bhuta*, a devil dancer is called in to exorcise the spirit. He arrives at night at the home of the possessed one, bringing with him a weird-looking individual wearing a loin cloth, a metal mask, and on his head an arch made of palm-leaves. The exorciser moans and groans, and recites *mantrams*, imitating the supposed gestures of a *bhuta*. His utterances grow louder and more rapid during the half-hour, or so, in which he performs. The assistant then begins to work himself up, also until he reaches a pitch of hysterical frenzy, while the exorciser, who has calmed down a little, beats the tom-toms. The *bhuta*, promising to behave and to accept food, enters the body of the assistant, and the demon's demand is governed by the appetite of the assistant. Often it requires flesh, and a considerable amount of toddy, to secure proper satisfaction. The exorciser receives from eight to ten rupees for effecting the spirit's departure.

When the Chembadis (Telugu fishermen) wish to cast a new net, a ceremony is performed over it. The net is folded and placed on the bank of a river, and mud is kneaded into three conical shapes. These shapes represent the god (the *lingam*). Cakes are placed before them, and one of the men, after biting into a cake, keeps it in his teeth, and walks three times round the net. The net is then dragged into the water, where the mud shapes of the god disintegrate. The net is smeared with the blood of the first fish caught in it.

The Cherumans of Malabar assemble in front of a barn door for their seed-planting ceremony. The barn door has previously been painted with rice-water. A lighted lamp is placed on the ground near the door, and as many cups have been made out of leaves as there are varieties of seeds in the barn. The owner of the barn, accompanied by a man carrying the leaf-cups in a new basket, opens the door. The others follow them into the barn, and calling on the gods and ancestors, they fill the cups with seeds.

After this, they all go to the fields, where a portion of the ground has been decorated with flowers and leaves. A new ploughshare is fastened to a new plough, and a pair of bullocks are brought and harnessed to the instrument. The bullocks and the plough are painted with rice water, and the man who

is carrying the basket of cups makes a mound of earth on which he sprinkles cow-dung and throws a handful of seeds. The bullocks then make one wide turn with the plough, and inside of this furrow, which forms a circle, seven smaller furrows are ploughed.

Next, the plough-handle is dropped, and the elephant-headed god is worshipped. A cocoanut is broken on the ploughshare, and from the broken portions deductions are made. If one piece is much larger than the others, the harvest will be moderate ; but if the eye of the nut has been broken through, misfortune is foretold. Into the piece of the cocoanut holding the most milk, a leaf of the tulsi plant is dropped. Should the leaf turn to the right, there will be an abundant harvest ; but if it turns to the left, calamity will follow. Sometimes a goat is sacrificed to Muni, the protector of bullocks and farmers, and when this is done, the blood of the creature is sprinkled on the ground.

The Palyans, during their seed-time festivals, bring paddy seeds and, standing at their assigned distance to avoid pollution, they throw the seeds on to a bamboo mat and return home. The seeds are an offering to the goddess Kali.

There is one festival, occurring in December, during which these people are allowed to enter the temples, and they make as much of this occasion as possible. They dance, sing, drink toddy, and let off fireworks. All night they keep up the celebration, and in the morning they go back to their work on the farms. They may not enter the temples again until the following year.

A ceremony is performed before the village deity, Namam-damma, by the Chembrambakam Lingayats, to ward off cholera and cattle diseases. Propitiation takes the form of blood sacrifice. A goat is killed, its intestines are placed in a pot, and the pot is covered over with a piece of the goat's skin. A low-caste man then takes the pot, and buries it at the village boundary. If anyone passes the man while he is carrying the pot through the streets, it is believed he will suffer from a serious illness and probably die. When the pot has been buried at the boundary, the goddess is said to give her promise that no cholera epidemic can break out in the village.

When rain has not fallen for some time on the Kapus'



fields, they go to the potter and ask him to make the figure of a human being. They place the figure in some prominent part of their fields, and call it Jokumara, the rain god. It is supposed that after the god has been offered gruel and rice, rain will fall.

Another form of Jokumara is outlined on the ground with powdered charcoal. It is believed that when people step on the figure the god will be insulted and cause it to rain.

Still another rain ceremony is performed by the Kapu women. They make the figure of a child out of mud and place it on a cloth, hammock-fashion. Then, swinging the cloth, they walk from door to door, singing indecent songs and begging alms. Each householder from whom they beg brings out a little water and pours it on the figure, and this is supposed to produce rain.

The Kapus perform a purification ceremony in the house of a woman who has misconducted herself. The members of the disgraced household sit about, and a black goat is carried round in a circle three or four times. The head of the goat is then cut off and buried. The guilty parties must tread on the spot where the head is buried, while water, mixed with tumeric, which has been previously offered to the god Ganesh, is poured. A house is defiled by the unchastity of either a maid or a widow. Sometimes many guests are invited to the purification ceremony, and quite an occasion is made of it.

If the wedding ceremony of the Komatis of the Madras Presidency lasts seven days, a curious performance takes place sometimes on the fifth day.

A cocoanut is carved to represent the face of a woman, with eyes, nose, and mouth. This cocoanut is placed on a decorated brass bowl, and the guests gather round it. A cow made of flour, which has been standing on a table, is then cut up and distributed to the guests. It is said that in the district where this ceremony is observed families are designated by the various parts of the cow. After portions of the flour cow have been passed round, camphor is burned before the cocoanut face and the light to avert the evil eye is waved before it. The ceremony ends by a young man of the bridegroom's party worshipping the feet of all present.

The village of Maliar in the Bellary district contains a

temple which is famous for its annual festival in the month of February. The festival is now nothing more than a cattle-fair and general bazaar, but a cryptic message is uttered there each year by the priest. The message is an agricultural prophecy for the ensuing year.

Siva is represented as returning victorious from battle, and the huge wooden bow with which the god is supposed to have slain the enemy is brought and placed upright before the idol. The *pujari* mounts, and stands for some minutes in rapt silence. He then begins to shiver and moan, which is a sign that he is possessed by the god. Soon after possession, the priest utters the prophecy which sounds to all but the initiated, very idiotic. However, the words are solemnly written down, and the fate of the next season's crops is foretold from them.

Large numbers of the lower orders visit the temple at Karamadi, in the Coimbatore district, where various vows are fulfilled at the annual festival. The performance includes the giving of *kavalam* (made of bananas cut in small pieces and mixed with crude sugar) to the Dasaris (mendicants). The Dasaris eat a little of the mixture, and spit the remainder into the hands of the devotees, who eat it. This partly-chewed mess is supposed to cure all diseases, and the filthy stuff is fed to children, whose parents have made some sort of vow to the goddess of the temple in their names. Sometimes a very ardent worshipper receives the mixture directly from the mouth of the beggar into his own mouth.

At night the Dasaris carry torches made of rags, on which the devotees have poured melted butter. The vows are usually made by couples desiring children, and something is promised to the temple goddess if the woman is relieved of barrenness. It is said that some years ago sterile women had sexual intercourse with the Dasaris in the hope of having children.

Kali, under the name of Chaudeswari, a tribal goddess, is worshipped annually by the Devangas in the Madras Presidency. The festival is held in the temple, or in a house which has been prepared for the occasion. The entire community usually attends. Those who take a prominent part in the ceremony must fast, and be careful to avoid pollution. The goddess is worshipped and an animal is sacrificed.

After the sacrifice the entire performance seems to be nothing but sword-balancing. The temple sword is brought out by the priest, and balanced on the edge of an earthen pot. While this is going on, men in the audience cut their chests with swords or knives. If the priest fails to balance the sword, something is supposed to have polluted the temple. Cow-urine is then sprinkled over the whole assembly to remove the pollution, and the priest tries again.

When the sword has been successfully balanced, a flour lamp that has been standing on the floor is lighted. The lamp is made always by members of the priest's family, by scooping out the centre of a huge mound of rice and flour and filling the cavity with clarified butter in which a wick is placed. When the flour lamp has been burned for a few minutes, the sword balancing recommences. Women watch the performance from the temple door. They are not allowed to enter the temple for fear of menstrual pollution.

In the district round Calicut, when a house is completed it must be handed over to its owner with due ceremony.

Vastu Purusha, a supreme being lying on its back with its head to the north and its legs to the south, supports the earth. The forests of the earth are this being's hairs, the oceans its blood, the wind its breath. When the earth is dug, and the trees are felled, the being is bound to be disturbed, wherefore it must be propitiated or it will wreak vengeance on its disturbers.

A ceremony must be performed immediately a house is built, or the owner of the building will have untimely deaths in his family. A square is marked off in the centre room by fifty-three columns made of rice flour, and red and black powders are sprinkled over the columns. Leaves, containing grain and pieces of cocoanut, are placed on the top of each column. The architect and the carpenters perform *puja* (worship) with flowers, incense and lights. Troublesome demons are propitiated with toddy, and the blood of a fowl is offered to the boy satan. Then all the workmen who have been engaged in the building break cocoanuts on the walls, and howl to drive away evil spirits.

The house is handed over to a third person by the chief carpenter, and there are few who are willing to assume the responsibility for the owner, since if a demon should be left

in the building it would for ever pursue the person who takes over. A man is sought who is supposed to bring good luck, and who has no trouble in his family. He is frequently a poor man, who cannot resist the bribe of money and rice. He is dressed in new clothes, taken to the centre room where the columns have been erected, and made to stand facing the door with each foot on a banana leaf. The others thereupon all leave him, and stand on the outside. The man opens and shuts the door three times, and the carpenter calls out to him : " Have you taken charge of the house ? " The man replies : " Have all the workmen received their wages ? " The carpenter, without answering, asks again : " Have you taken charge of the house ? " There must be no direct answers, or questions, for about ten minutes.

Finally, the man inside says : " I will take charge of the house," and picking up the two banana leaves on which he has been standing, he runs away as fast as he can, without looking back. The workmen pelt him with bananas and cow-dung as he runs, and sprinkle cow-urine in his path. After this, the workmen are fed with boiled milk and rice which have been prepared in the new house, and the owner may move in.

The fire-walking ceremony is not so popular as it used to be, and many castes do not observe it at all. Occasionally there is a ceremony, when fanaticism has been mounting pretty high and a community can bear the expense.

I attended one not so long ago in Mysore State. A pit had been dug, about fifty feet long and about ten feet wide, and when I arrived it was a seething mass of fire. At one end there was a pool of water, through which the performers waded after they had crossed the fire. The fire-walkers were dressed in short yellow *dhoties* and garlands of jasmine. The gods had been brought out, and were arranged along the edges of the pit. I examined the feet of two men before and after they crossed. There was nothing done to their feet to deaden the pain, and there was not the slightest trace of a burn. One man, moreover, had crossed through the fire-pit in a quite leisurely fashion. I attempt no explanation.

Another man crossed with a baby in his arms, which had been passed to him at the last moment by its mother. For one awful moment I had a picture of the walker, maddened by pain, dropping his tiny burden into the flames. Yet,

actually, the man smiled as he went, and handed the baby, which was clapping its hands and laughing, back to its mother on the other side of the pool.

An Indian who was watching the performance, told me it would rain when the ceremony was over, and the gods would put the fire out. As a matter of fact it did rain at the conclusion of the ceremony, but I think the gods had less to do with it than the Indian monsoon season.

The Tiyans, in certain of their divisions, have an interesting divorce ceremony.

All the relatives and friends of the couple wishing to separate, assemble at the home of one of the wife's relations. Two men act as judges, one for either side. These men are called *tandans*. A lighted lamp is placed on the floor beside two stools, and a cloth is laid on one stool, with two rupees upon it. On the other stool the wife's uncle stretches a thread, which he has pulled out of the garment he is wearing. The husband carries the stool which holds the thread to the door and, facing the assembly, says three times: "matrimonial connection is severed." He then blows the thread away, throws down the stool, and departs for ever.

If this ceremony were performed in the man's own house, it would mean perpetual banishment from his property; as he must, in no circumstances, enter the house he has left for ever. The uncle gives the thread from his *dhotie*, because it was he who received a present of two pieces of cloth at the marriage ceremony. The two rupees are taken by the *tandans*. A marriage cannot be dissolved unless both parties agree.

The Tiyans of the higher divisions (in common, indeed, with all Indians) repudiate relationship with persons of lower grades of the same caste. It is a custom of the country to pretend complete ignorance of a caste, or an individual, lower in the social scale. Tiyans who have come under Western influence, and there are many of them, would deny all knowledge of the primitive divorce ceremony of their unemancipated divisions.

I have described the puberty rites in the chapters on castes, but the Tiyans have such an elaborate performance

in that connection that I shall record it here with the ceremonies.

At such time a girl is under pollution for four days. During that period she must keep to the north side of the house, and sleep on a grass mat in a room festooned with flowers and leaves of the young cocoanut. Round the mat a ridge is made of unhusked rice and leaves of the areca palm. A lamp burns on the floor night and day, and near it are placed the articles used in connection with marriage. Another girl stays with the polluted girl, but she does not touch her, or any of the articles by which she is surrounded.

In no circumstances must the girl under pollution see the sky, while, should she happen to catch sight of a cat, she would become a widow when very young. She is armed against evil spirits with a knife, or a piece of iron, which she carries on her person, or places on the mat beside her.

On the second day a copper pot, on which perpendicular lines have been traced with lime, is brought into the room by her aunt, who fills the pot with leaves of the areca palm. When the aunt has arranged the pot according to custom, she places a piece of gold on the top of the girl's head and pours gingelly oil (*sesamun*) over her. The operation is repeated by two other women, who have followed the aunt into the room carrying little cups made of leaves. The oil is poured from these cups, and if the piece of gold upon the girl's head is a coin, and happens to fall off during the performance with the obverse side upwards, it is a very good omen and promises fertility to the girl. Cooked rice and fruit are brought in, and the women have a feast by themselves. The polluted girl is not permitted to eat rice, but she may have any other grain.

On the third night the washerman arrives, carrying two clean *saris*. A woman takes the *saris*, and exchanges them for the clothes which the girl is wearing. The washerman then receives the clothes that are taken from the girl.

A lamp with an odd number of wicks is kept burning in front of the house, and a bamboo basket, containing rice, bananas, a piece of turmeric, some straw, and a little cocoanut fibre, is placed near the lamp. The washerman dumps the contents of the basket into a cloth, which he puts on a wooden bench, and on either side of the cloth he places half a cocoanut.

He then takes the soiled clothes which he has received from the girl, places them on his head, and walks three times round the bench singing a song. The aunt and the other women join him, carrying lighted lamps. They, also, circle the bench three times ; but before doing this, the aunt must cover her breast with a piece of silk and put on as many ornaments as she can find.

After the women have circled the bench, the aunt takes up the bundle and, followed by the other women, she and the washerman go to the room where the girl is sleeping. The bundle is put down near the girl's head, and the washerman receives a sack of rice and some money.

On the fourth day the washerman fixes a branch of the margosa tree in the ground, and at the top of it he ties a long thread. This is supposed to represent the bow of Kama, the Indian Eros. The washerman next erects a miniature temple of cocoanut leaves and banana stems by the side of a tank, and near this structure he places two cocoanuts, one of which has been blackened by charcoal and the other stained with turmeric. Uncooked rice is scattered round the cocoanuts.

The girl, having been rubbed with oil and dressed in a clean *sari*, comes out of the house followed by the women. They go to the tank, where they bathe, wearing their *saris* all the time. After the bath, they stand on the edge of the tank, facing east and holding in their hands lighted wicks, which have been given to them by the washerman. The washerman again breaks into song, and the women throw the burning wicks into the miniature temple.

The husband of the girl then appears. He puts a cocoanut on the ground, with a long wick across it lighted at both ends. The girl walks back and forth three times without touching the cocoanut, after which with a chopper she is supposed to sever the wick and the cocoanut exactly in half. If she is successful it is a good omen.

The girl bathes a second time, carrying a cocoanut on a stem into the water with her. As she comes out of the water, she kicks the cocoanut and sends it flying from the stem. She is escorted back to the house by the women, who hold a small canopy over her head. The women dress her in the second *sari* which the washerman presented, and many ornaments have been received during the ceremony. The girl puts them

all on, and a feast is held to which the whole of the settlement is invited.

The girl has so far been purified, but she cannot touch any cooking-vessel until she has undergone another ceremony. This takes place on the ninth day, after the first appearance of the menses. Every day until this final ceremony the girl must be anointed with oil and turmeric paste.



## CHAPTER XXVI

### MARRIAGE

**T**O approach the question of marriage, in any country, is a difficult task. Like all questions, it has two sides ; namely, the spiritual and carnal. It is when these two sides come into conflict that the fat is in the fire and trouble commences.

The law of Manu, on which Hindu orthodoxy bases all its arguments, has no idea of the reciprocity of rights and duties. It relegates the position of women to one of subjection, and from it Hindu women have never been able to raise themselves. The Padma Purana has drawn up a detailed code for the conduct of women, and this code at no time in her life allows a woman the slightest modicum of independence.

It is laid down, for example, among other things, that a wife must faithfully reproduce the moods of her husband. If he laughs, she must laugh ; if he cries, she must cry with him ; if he is sad, she must be sad also ; if he asks her questions, she must answer. Her domestic duties cover several verses, in which attention and diligence are emphasized. She must even be careful to guard against exhibitions of temper, and no allowances for just wrath are made, even in the case of immoral suggestions. From such suggestions the woman's only safeguard is in flight.

During her husband's absence from the house, a wife must be on the alert to greet his return by meeting him at the door, bringing him a stool to sit upon, and serving his food prepared to his taste. If her husband becomes angry and beats her, she must bear all patiently and uncomplainingly. When he speaks she must not interrupt, and when he calls she must drop what she is doing and run to do his bidding. To leave the home on account of a quarrel with her husband would entail public scandal, and should never be done. Only with her husband's permission may a wife attend ceremonies

and feasts, and on her return she must give him a minute rendering of every insignificant detail. A wife can obtain no true happiness except through her husband ; he it is who gives her children, clothes, jewels, flowers, sandalwood, saffron, and all the good things of life.

The Dharma Sastras counselled the husband to co-operate with his wife in all ceremonies, with the idea of making them more efficacious.

In India each attempt to raise the status of women has created such a storm of protest from orthodox Hindus, as to require a very courageous Governor to interest himself in the matter. The Sarda Act, the motion of an Indian, was placed on the Statutes in 1925. It sought to raise the age of consent, within or without the marriage tie, to the age of fourteen. How far the act has been a success only the hospitals can say. Nurses and doctors have told me that they have frequently to deal with pre-puberty laceration.

Argument on this vexed question still fills the local Press, and in February of this year the editor of the *Indian Thinker*, an orthodox Brahman, sent the following telegram of protest to Mr. Krishmachari of the Legislative Assembly : " The appeal supporting the Sarda Act, issued by the women's association, is a tissue of misjudgments and misstatements issued by people absolutely unaffected by the Act, and by birth and training unrepresentative of those affected." Those affected, of course, can be only the young women who, by tradition and training, have been totally subjected to a point where it has become impossible for them to raise their voices.

The above telegram continues : " Instead of pandering to the conservatives, as the appeal would have it, the law-makers have pandered to the social reform politicians, and have taken advantage of the unorganized position of Hindu orthodoxy." In the expression " the unorganized position of Hindu orthodoxy " is the crux of the whole position in India. If this position was really organized, India would be a great country. But what organization can Indians ever hope for, when the whole foundation of Hinduism to-day is built upon the sand of myth. Tradition must be exposed and torn down before any " organized position " can be built on firm foundations.

The telegram concludes : " If England realizes that the

true object of marriage is not individual convenience or carnal comfort, but a necessary step towards the goal of salvation and capable of being rationally worked out, she herself would be adopting the non-carnal system of pre-puberty marriage. Tell Government point-blank, in all humility, that this Act is a crime by the State, and the consternation created will continue so long as it remains unrepealed." So long as the procreation of children remains as it is, I am afraid that Mr. Subramania Iyer, the author of the above protest, has little chance of getting England to accept his way of thinking on the question of non-carnal, pre-puberty marriage. We all accept the ethical side of some sort of bethrothal before marriage. And I see no harm in a pre-puberty bethrothal in India, amongst those who are able to practise self-restraint, and are far-sighted enough to be able to reason for the national good—that is to say, on the spiritual side. But unfortunately facts prove that the carnal overcomes the spiritual, and becomes a menace when one of the parties to a marriage is, by religious or traditional training, in total subjection. Either India must renounce its subjection of women, or conform to a law protecting the subjected.

It is possible that Mr. Subramania Iyer would like to take the platform for the allegorical marriage of trees, which is so often practised in his country. I speak of the marriage of the aswatta tree. The tree itself is sacred, symbolizing Vishnu or, according to some writers, being one of the incarnations of Vishnu.

Using the same ceremonies as are used for their boys, and with much feasting of Brahmans, the Hindus invest the tree with the triple cord or sacred thread. This ceremony transforms the tree into a divinity, by incorporating with it the body of Vishnu. Some years later a mate is chosen for the tree, and with all the pomp and ceremony of a Brahman wedding a bride, in the shape of a vepu or nim tree (*Melia azadirachta*), is brought and legally married to the aswatta. Naturally this ceremony is not incurred without great expense, to which the local inhabitants are asked to subscribe. The Brahmans, however, raise large subscriptions, by telling the people that great merit will accrue to all those bearing the costs of such a ceremony, and numbers of Brahmans are fed at these tree-marriages by the easily-beguiled subscribers.

In one particular case, in the south, the subscription list topped two thousand rupees.

In the fruit-growing districts of the country it is supposed to be extremely unlucky for the owner of a plantation, or his wife, to taste any of their own fruit until one of the trees has been legally married to another of a different species. To protect himself against this superstition, an owner of a mango grove will marry one of his trees, preferably to a tamarind tree, but if there is no tamarind handy for transplantation, a jasmine will serve as a bride. The ceremony, of course, is not concluded without the entertainment of as many Brahmans as the planter can afford to invite. Behind this ceremony, no doubt, lies some crude idea of grafting, and I have tasted many mangoes of varying flavours, especially that of jasmine. Perhaps Mr. Subramania Iyer would tell us what "goal of salvation" we might arrive at, if we married our elms to our oaks.

The origin of these tree-marriages centres round an old legend, which relates that Brahma, of the four faces, induced a certain prince Indramena to restore the temple of Jagganath that had become buried in the sand. This edifice, dedicated to Vishnu, was reported to be built of solid gold. After many adventures (which have no bearing on this subject), Indramena discovered the temple, but decided that it could not be restored. On this fact being pointed out to Brahma, however, he allowed the prince to build a new temple upon the old site. The new temple should cost as much as the former, and Brahma promised that Vishnu would return and take up his residence, but that in this case he would come in the shape of a tree, which would be washed up by the sea. When the new building was completed, Vishnu delayed his return so long that the whole community decided the construction must have been faulty, and failed to please such a fastidious god. But eventually the trunk of an aswatta tree was washed up on the shore, and identified by Indramina as Vishnu. With great pomp and ceremony, then, the tree was conducted to the temple, and a wood-carver, Visvakarma, was deputed to carve the face and figure of Krishna upon the trunk. Visvakarma contracted to do this in a single night, on the condition that he was left alone and subjected to no surveillance. To this the prince agreed,

but curiosity and suspicion got the better of him and he broke his word. Visvakarma, discovering the fact, departed in high dudgeon, leaving his work uncompleted. Indramena, nevertheless, accepted the trunk as his god, and gave it his daughter in marriage. Later authorities symbolized Idramena's daughter in the nim tree.

The last Maratha king of Tanjore, by name Maharaja Sivaji, not being content with his three wives, and not wishing to waste his time on pre-puberty arrangements, married seventeen girls in a body. It is said that in 1907 three of his queens were still living in the palace at Tanjore.

I have said very little in this book about child marriage. So much has been said already on this subject that there is little more to say.

I admit that child marriage should be discontinued. But I have endeavoured to show that it is not a national institution. Many castes of the south, where is the real home of Hinduism, do not practise child marriage at all. Moreover, while it is encouraged in some of the Vedas, it is more emphasized in the vast collection of writings which claim to be founded upon them.

## CONCLUSION

**I**NDIA to-day is facing a critical period in her history. She is adrift from her old moorings ; buffeted and tossed by the waves of a democracy which she cannot understand. The Maharaja, once the representative of God on earth, is no longer the paternal caretaker, and like the people has lost his hold on existing conditions. Trade is faced with boycott and strikes, and political experiments have failed, the people for whom they were organized being unable to understand them. The Brahmans and caste system are anachronisms which the Indian does not know how to shake off. The unchanging East, in fine, must change, or the momentum gathering behind her will rush her along as the avalanche sweeps all before it. India has an opportunity ; but will she rise to it, or will she wait for the chaos and ruin that follows the avalanche ? Will she imitate Russia, and accept another sort of primitiveness, which, while different, is as helpless and degrading as the one the country is now struggling under ?

The entire life of the Hindu is governed by his religion, and we might say that the improvement of his religion would also improve him. But nothing, alas, seems capable of achieving this. Hinduism is a long record of reforms and backslidings. It passed through the Sruti period, when the Vedas were believed to be the lower knowledge of heavenly truth. Superstition and priestcraft, however, proved more powerful than heavenly truth, and sacrifices and rituals became almost too numerous to be listed. All petty orders became important, and the distance which one pot should be placed from another, the length of a piece of grass to be waved over the head, the way one put on one's clothes, even the brushing of the teeth, became solemn rites under priestly supervision. To ignore the most trivial act, would rob a sacrifice of its effect.

Krishna tried to abolish the worship of Indra and to purify Hinduism, but the Mahabharata proved too strong for him.

In the sixth century B.C., Buddha started a movement against the gods and priests, but the Hindus did not want the philosophy of nothingness. Buddha's utter denouncement of any God at all was a revolt against blood sacrifice, whether human or animal, and against debauch. Jainism, again, was a rebellion against the growth of priest-superstition, and Basava unsuccessfully tried to level all castes.

All the reforms were absorbed into Hinduism. Hinduism admitted every creed into itself through reincarnation, and each reformer became a reincarnation of some previous Hindu god or sage. Surfaces were altered, the Sanskrit alphabet was overhauled, new names were given to things, the six philosophies were embellished, myths were invented in which the gods appeared in various shapes to explain creation, Krishna became the god of love ; but the laws of the Vedas went merrily on.

In India, side by side with the would-be establishment of a supreme God, existed human and animal sacrifices at which hundreds of priests were constantly engaged. Drunkenness, gambling, and licentiousness became part of the religious festivals. Changing the gods round, and giving them different places like pawns on a chess-board, did not change their offices, and their successors simply assumed their mantles. Some of the Rig-Vedic gods became minor deities. Soma, the god of drink, whose greatness is celebrated in a whole book of the Rig-Veda, became a minor deity ; Indra shared the same fate ; and, Varuna, the god of righteousness, was relegated to a semi-obscurity. A new crop of gods was made supreme. Siva, once a subordinate to Rudra, with Vishnu, a lesser god, became the leaders, while Brahma's duties were changed and he was given a more material rôle.

The priest had such a grip on the imagination in A.D. 649 that King Siladitya robbed his subjects and gave everything to the temples, in order to purchase his future salvation. It is said that the king did not keep enough clothes for himself or his queen. Everything went to the priests, while his people suffered and starved.

Islamic conversions left no choice to the convert. It was either Islam, or death. This is why many southern Indians are still Hindus under a very thin Mohammedan veneer. The Muslim invasion, which apparently overthrew Hinduism

in the north for a while, was political, and when peace was restored, the north reinstated the southern gods. South India, owing to its geographical position, was protected from the Mohammedan onslaught.

At the present time Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, and Theosophy are attempting to purify Hinduism. But converts to these three orders steadily slide back to the former beliefs. There is something so insidious about Hinduism, that persons who join certain sects become full-fledged, even if unconscious, Hindus.

The Hindu religion is as much alive to-day as ever it was. A thousand years of Muslim domination, and hundreds of years of Christian persuasion, have failed to make the slightest impression on the older religion. Yet the religions of Egypt, Persia, Greece and pagan Rome are nothing but memories, which proves that politics and propaganda cannot overthrow Hinduism.

At the base of this pertinacity lies, I believe, the importance of self, which Hinduism teaches before everything. Even the gods can be bought up and bargained with, and every Hindu has it in the back of his mind to retire some time to the forest and concentrate on his own salvation. The idea of future happiness, where he is again an individual, has so gripped his imagination nothing can dislodge it. Family, the dearly-beloved sons, sacrifice, caste, are simply stepping-stones to personal salvation, and sacrifice is a bargain made with the gods for personal gain. The sacrifice of Hindu women, which we hear so much about, is based on fear and tradition. The women sacrifice themselves for the good of their husbands, because they must. Everything in Hinduism stands for the importance of self, and that self is the male self. Mohammedans and Christians say that theirs are the highest gods, and the Hindu quietly accepts them and gives them a place in the Hindu pantheon. These gods, the Hindu knows, can do nothing to overcome the belief in self; they are no more to the Hindu than his own gods.

All gods, then, are pegs to hold self-love. Siva can sleep in his snow-capped paradise; Brahma may remain in his Satty-loka; and Vishnu, with his wife Lakshmi, can contemplate art in his heaven. When the Hindu wants them, he will use them for the salvation of self.



The only reason that other religions have emerged from myths, superstitions, and exaggerations, is because they have put something before self, and a new Hindu party, realizing this, is trying at the present time to undermine the existing religion of India. But will it be strong enough? Not with politics can this be accomplished, nor even with education. It requires a definite change in character.

Character is based on man's ideals, which are not necessarily the ideals of religion. Character of men and nations must be able to stand the strain of temptation and self-acquisition, when the latter means the disregard of human society. The Indian people have never been conquered in thought, and considering that this has been tried many times, it goes to prove that such conquest is not possible. The Indian must change himself, must *want* to change. The new Hindu party knows that such change cannot be effective until Hinduism is loosened at the foundation, until priests and Brahmans are put where they belong.

Once the Indian arouses himself, he will accomplish what no outsider can accomplish for him. Once he uses his great talents in a new direction, he will win the acclaim of a watching world.

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